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1. Juvenile literature - Fiction, American

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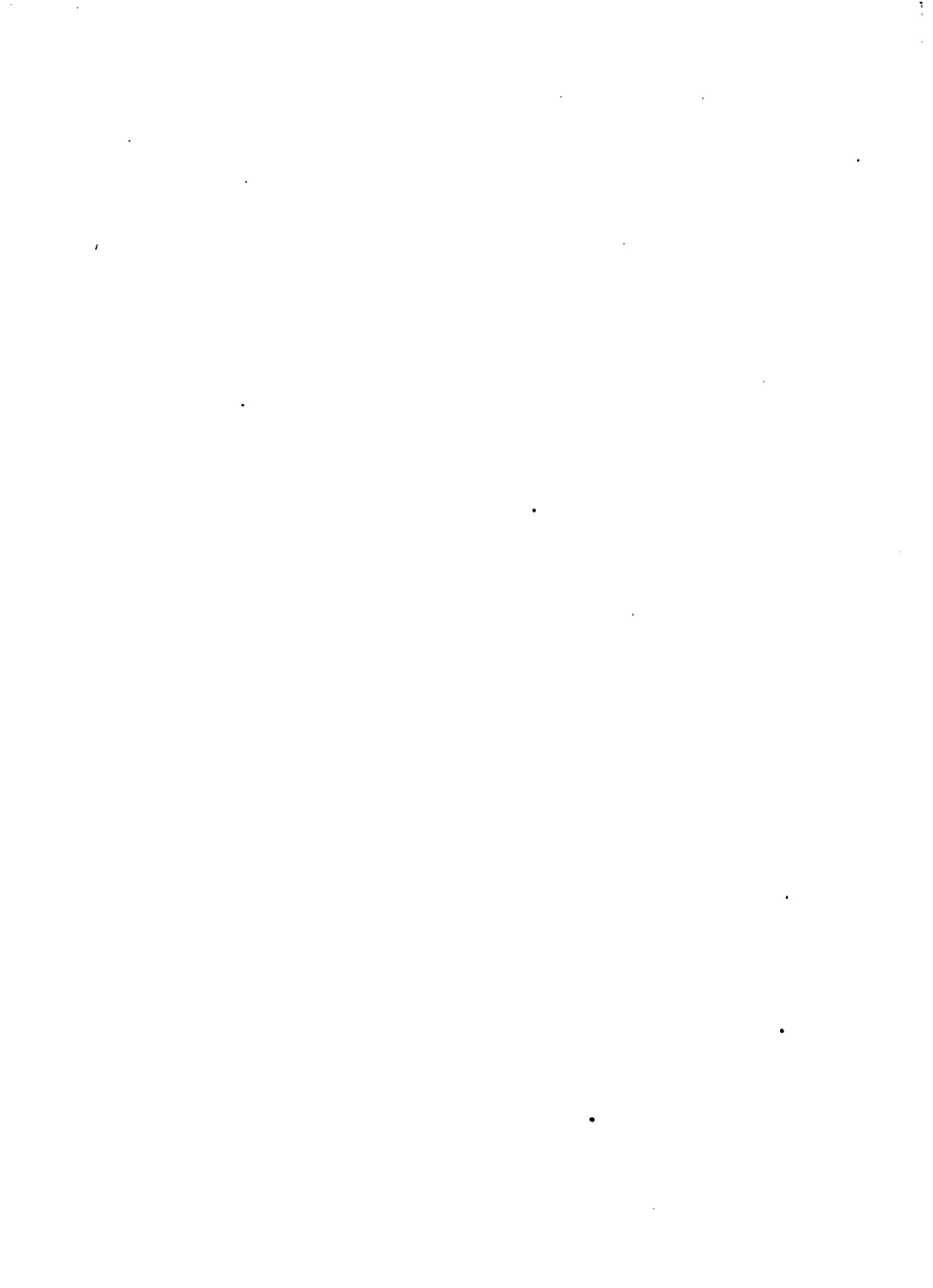
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SHE WAS FRANKLY LISTENING

AR CO-ED

LOUISE LEE

AN CO-ED
OF THE CO-ED



EDITED BY

W. HIMMELSTADT

IN PUBLICATION
AND PUBLICATION
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SHE WAS FRANKLY LISTENING

A JUNIOR, CO-ED

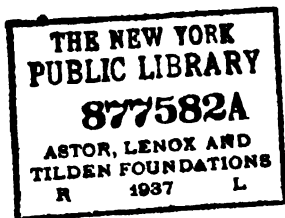
BY ALICE LOUISE LEE

AUTHOR OF
A FRESHMAN CO-ED
A SOPHOMORE CO-ED



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Introduction

HUNTINGDON, as the readers of "A Freshman Co-ed" and "A Sophomore Co-ed" will remember, is a co-educational college. To its freshman class came Winifred Lowe, a bright-haired little maiden with some very difficult problems to solve. One of them was the big question of how she should earn a living while she took her college course. Still another was the troublesome question as to whether she should give up her place in the Alpha Gamma Sorority, and also her college course, in order to make a place for a rich girl whose father might help the college. All of this was told in the first book of the series.

In "A Sophomore Co-ed" Winifred, who had some powerful friends, found college life a good deal merrier and enjoyed it to the full. At the same time, she and some of the other girls, who appeared in the first book, carried through successfully a Girls' Edition of a daily newspaper, and won for the college the support of a wealthy man who had been antagonistic to it. One of Winifred's aides was M. Gussie Barker, a young lady

INTRODUCTION

whose strong opinions amused but sometimes antagonized her fellow students.

Alpha Gamma has prominence in all the stories, and its jolly girls, among them Rebecca Bicknell, Lillian Antwerp, and the "Twin Sisters," who became known as the "Sin Twisters," help Winifred over many a hard place in her college course.

Contents

I.	A VALUABLE SECURITY	9
II.	ARMY BLUE	30
III.	SAIRY MARY	51
IV.	THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP	72
V.	A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY	91
VI.	CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS	113
VII.	SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS	136
VIII.	" I GOTTA HUSTLE "	155
IX.	AN INTERVIEW	176
X.	AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT	199
XI.	PREPARATIONS	216
XII.	THE SURPRISE	236
XIII.	THE FROLIC	253
XIV.	LILLIAN'S RING	273
XV.	MICE AND MEN	287
XVI.	NEWSY'S CLOTHES	305
XVII.	A RAT-HOLE	321
XVIII.	FROM THE DUST	339



Illustrations

SHE WAS FRANKLY LISTENING	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"IS MINE AT ALL BECOMING?"	38
"THE FLOOR IS THE ONLY MODERN THING HERE"	124
"IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR A STARTER"	151
SHE PROBED FOR A SPLINTER	231
"WE'VE WON! WE'VE WON!"	261
"ISN'T THIS IT?"	327

A Junior Co-ed.

A Junior Co-ed

CHAPTER I

A VALUABLE SECURITY

WINIFRED LOWE, in the privacy of her room at the Alpha Gamma Chapter House, eagerly untied a large hat box which the expressman had just left.

"Oh, isn't it a dear!" she cried aloud. "She knows I have always wanted a big black beaver with a plume—a beauty just like this. Isn't it exactly like her to send it?"

"Her" was Mrs. Helen Joyce Forest, who had sent the hat as a parting gift from New York on the eve of sailing to Italy, the country whose sunny skies were drawing her away from the winter rigors of Huntingdon.

Winifred, pinning the hat on her fluffy blonde hair, sighed involuntarily as she glanced out of the window between the intervening houses at No. 3 Fourth Avenue, within the gray stone walls of which she had spent such a happy year with Mrs. Forest. The chapter house was claiming her

A JUNIOR CO-ED

for the junior year and her important duties as junior house stewardess.

As she was adjusting the last hat pin, a hubbub of footsteps and voices swept up the stairs and past her closed door to the room at the end of the hall. After the hubbub came the slamming of doors and the hurrying of detached footsteps as individual girls flew down the hall and fell into the end room with a smothered cry of, "Oh, Flossie, I'm so glad to see you!"

Winifred, who understood the cause of the tumult, hastily withdrew the hat pins, and, leaving the picture hat on the bed, reached the hall in time to hear Rebecca Bicknell's voice soar about the noise in the end room:

"Somebody shut that door, or we'll disturb Mrs. Munroe. She always takes a nap at this hour."

The door closed with a bang which would have awakened the Seven Sound Sleepers had they succeeded in napping anywhere in the house through the previous racket. Falling over a suit-case which had been dropped just around the corner in the turn of the hall, Winifred gave a perfunctory rap on the closed door and entered without awaiting a summons. It would not have been forthcoming in any case, as the permanent occupants of the room, Lillian Antwerp and Rebecca Bicknell, were so overwhelmed with callers that, as Lillian hospi-

A VALUABLE SECURITY

tably remarked, there was no place she could put even her foot without danger of having it stepped on!

In the midst of the room stood a newcomer, Flossie Rogers, who had been traveling in the West and was four weeks late in entering college. Her hat was on the dresser upside down, with its long veil impaled on a broken bottle. Her coat lay at her feet—or rather under them—while her hairpins were dropping around her in a gentle shower, a testimony to the violence of the greetings accorded her.

Winifred managed to get near enough to shake an all-over lace elbow which projected from the latest style of short sleeve, and kissed the tip of an ear already red from too vigorous although affectionate pulling.

Flossie turned and extricating herself from the girlish swirl, gave Winifred a great hug. "Now, Freddie, for pity sake don't say how awfully I have gained in flesh during the summer. I know I have, but I don't like to hear it at every stopping-place. It's awful enough to bear. It's my cross, mamma says——"

"And it makes you cross as a bear sometimes," came in a mutter from Alma Dexter, Flossie's roommate, who never lost an opportunity to play on words. The girls began by calling her the

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Punster and ended by referring to her simply as "Punch."

Flossie sat down on the bed couch and some one rescued her coat while she continued, "In the words of the immortal Shakespeare, 'Oh, that this too, too solid'—solid what?" she ended blankly. "It winds up with 'flesh would melt.' What comes in between?"

"A patent remedy for melting the flesh," suggested Rebecca Bicknell, who understood Flossie's weakness for any remedy—except self-denial—which promised thinness.

Flossie blushed and wriggled uncomfortably. "Girls, I'll tell you something if you won't tell."

"Of course we won't," promised Winifred promptly, looking around the room. "There are only about twenty of us here—we ought to be able to keep a secret among us!"

"I started out this summer," Flossie began solemnly, "to get thinner—and I got thicker."

"There's no secret about that," commented Punch heartlessly. "The fact is apparent."

"First I dieted," explained Flossie, "and then I didn't. It was awful!"

"Which?" asked Belle Eaton.

"Both! First I went to three doctors and they all told me different things, so I took the easiest, and that was milk and crackers—just milk and

A VALUABLE SECURITY

crackers. And, girls, in six weeks I lost eighteen pounds." Flossie sighed and rolled her eyes. "I looked so well," she went on guilelessly, "and had two dressmakers come and take in all my clothes. Then some one told me to drink vinegar and that would make me actually lean. So I did, and oh!"

She paused to throw up her hands impressively.

"Did it?" demanded the Sin Twisters in one breath. The Twisters were themselves inclined toward too much plumpness.

"Did it?" Flossie almost screamed. "Perhaps it would if it hadn't given me such an awful appetite that I could have eaten—eaten cold pancakes out of the ash barrel! Why, papa said that my dining-car bills were so immense that we should have been obliged to stop traveling anyway if college hadn't opened."

"But why are you so late?" asked Lillian. "You came home in time to get here opening day."

Flossie turned a full round face on her interlocutor and regarded her with round blue eyes.

"The dressmakers had to come back again," she announced sadly.

For a time she could not be heard, but further explanation was needless, and presently the talk turned on other things.

"I feel so mournful," confided Flossie, "when-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

ever I think that Miss Mildred will not be here this year—and Mrs. Forest is so far away.”

“Well, we have Winifred,” consoled Erma Cunningham, “and it will be so nice to run out to Mrs. Dansbury’s”—Mr. and Mrs. Dansbury were touring in Europe—“and you know we are fortunate to get Mrs. Munroe back again.”

One of the freshmen nodded sagely. “Mrs. Munroe’s quite deaf and doesn’t know half what is going on.”

Adelaide Prell giggled involuntarily, but directly thereafter fixed the freshman with a severe eye. “The upper classmen will see that all house rules are observed,” she warned staidly. “That is not altogether the duty of a chaperon, and Mrs. Munroe is very nice and dignified. She shows off well as our chaperon at social functions.”

“Girls,” Flossie proclaimed, “there’s some perfectly splendid butter-scotch in my suit-case—wherever that is.”

“I have reason to know where it is,” volunteered Winifred.

“So have I,” in equally feeling terms from Punch. “My zeal outran my discretion when I saw Flossie, and I offered to carry it up from the cab. It must be packed with gold bricks. How did you get it off the train, Flossie?”

“A square young man carried it for me—oh,

A VALUABLE SECURITY

you needn't laugh. He looked perfectly square and nice and like the son of a veteran. He's a new student. He saw my pin and sat down in front of me without so much as 'by your leave,' and asked questions as though he were firing 'em from his father's gun. He was run in a football player's mould, and yet he says he never kicked a ball in his life. Think of that! If Captain Stearns doesn't nab him quick I'll lose my guess!"

Suddenly Lillian Antwerp sprang to her feet with an exclamation. "Girls, I have an appointment with Professor Hershall for four o'clock, to talk over my junior thesis, and here it is——"

Rebecca drew her watch from under her belt. "Five now," she observed carelessly. No one expected Lillian to keep an appointment, except the deluded faculty, and they learned better—in time.

"But the appointment is so important, Reb, you might have reminded me of it," grieved Lillian. "To-day is the last day of grace. If I don't get that thesis started to-day I shall have to write an additional three thousand words."

"Ask the professor to let you talk 'em," suggested Rebecca. "It would take only about ten minutes of his time——"

"I have some work to do in the chancellor's office, Lillian," interrupted Winifred at the door.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Come on up with me, and maybe we can find Professor Hershall yet."

"I don't know whether I'd rather see him now and apologize for not keeping my appointment or write the three thousand words. Disagreeable things are always coming up that one must decide," and the careless, care-free Lillian left the room in a mournful state.

As she closed the door, Flossie's eyes were caught by the flash of a diamond on the third finger of her right hand.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Flossie. "What a ring! Where'd Lil get that?"

"That's one of her father's ideas," explained Rebecca. "It cost six hundred dollars, and he got it for Lillian as an investment—investment, mind you! Isn't he great? You see he realizes that she spends every cent which she gets right off, and he fixed things so that she would not have the ready money to spend, but could still raise money anywhere on this ring if it should be necessary. See?"

"Indeed I do see." Flossie sat up alertly. "I'll write to father. Maybe I can get him to make an investment for me."

In vain Winifred and Lillian sought Professor Hershall on the Hill. Having failed to receive Lillian in his office at the appointed hour he had

A VALUABLE SECURITY

gone home, grimly leaving that young lady face to face with the prospect of the additional three thousand words.

"Yours is already commenced," she accused Winifred. "Why didn't you make me attend to mine?"

Winifred laughed. "There is an old saying that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. I have talked to you about that thesis until my throat aches thinking about it!"

Lillian sighed and sat down at the window in the chancellor's office gazing out pensively. "And there I made a resolution this year not to neglect a single thing, and I thought it would be much easier for me to keep it because you would be in the house and could remind me of everything."

Winifred, busy at the typewriter, made no reply, and for a few moments the click of the machine alone broke the silence of the room. In the adjoining office, through the half-open door, the registrar could be heard moving about intent on straightening out the week's accounts and putting away his books, for the morrow was Sunday, and the Hall of Languages almost deserted.

Suddenly, from the direction of the Psi Upsilon Chapter House, uprose a solemn rhythmical chant in masculine voices, accompanied by the tread, also rhythmical, of masculine feet.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Lillian, all her pensiveness flown, leaned out of the open window. "Winifred, quick. It's the Psi U's. They initiate to-night. Listen. Isn't that enough to give you the creeps up and down your spine?"

"Abandon all hope, ye who enter here," was the chant which encouraged the delegation of ten freshmen who headed a procession bound for the Psi Upsilon Chapter House. The ten were clad in long black robes with hoods which concealed the upper parts of their faces. Two and two they walked with heads bent low. After them, in full dress, an imposing array, marched the entire active chapter and the city alumni. Up the steps and into the white pillared house they marched, the door closing on the last echo of "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here."

Lillian giggled. "I wonder how those freshies feel? Aren't college students foolish? And isn't it fun to be foolish?"

Winifred nodded emphatically and returned to the machine. Lillian, her head still out of the window, hummed the mournful chant of the Psi U's and surveyed the campus, gorgeous with its maple trees clad in scarlet and gold. They lined the drives and outlined the walks. They shaded the rustic seats and, mingled with elms, defined the boundaries of the campus. A huge maple

A VALUABLE SECURITY

lifted its head proudly in front of the newly completed Stearns Science Hall. A cluster strove to hide the architectural beauties of the auditorium, the gift of the famous alumna whose absence Winifred felt so keenly.

Presently from the foot of Fourth Avenue uprose a familiar cry, shrill and monotonous. Nearer and nearer it came until it resolved itself into words uttered in a childish voice, and the Hill was, from end to end, appraised of the fact that the Evening News was the best paper in the city, and that its latest edition was now on sale—seller, “Newsy” Wilmot.

“Here’s yer best pa-a-pier,” shrilled Newsy. “The News it is—all the news—more’n ye can read fer two cents—Evenin’ News—here’s yer best pa-a-pier.”

The small human news stand came into view, a strap over his shoulder helping support his burden, his cap cocked far over one ear, his shoes worn at the toes and a wide band of crêpe around each sleeve. In the late spring Newsy’s mother had died. The crêpe was the only memorial her small son could erect to her memory, and both memorial and the coat to which it was attached had been furnished by Landon Stearns.

“There’s only one of me to put crêpe on,” he told Landon tearfully, “and I want it ’round both

A JUNIOR CO-ED

me sleeves," and the giver had been generous in the matter.

Later, when time and endless activities had dulled the edge of the child's grief, he regarded the crêpe with much pride. It conferred a distinction on him among his confederates and the small relatives whose home he now shared.

"Newsy is in good voice to-night," observed Lillian as he ran up the steps of the "Bee Hive," a girls' eating-house near College Road.

She was about to withdraw her head from the window, when, happening to glance below, she made a discovery, and called Winifred to the window to share it.

"Look down, Winifred. It's Flossie's square young man. See? The son of a veteran in his father's army blue suit—made over at that. Look!"

Winifred looked. On the steps, watching Newsy intently, stood a young man who certainly had every appearance of squareness. His head seemed square from the forehead to the chin. His shoulders were square, and as he was under medium height, his body suggested squareness. The general effect was accentuated by an appearance of squareness in his manner.

"Oh, that derby! It must have gone with the suit through the war," whispered Lillian.

A VALUABLE SECURITY

The hat in question was an old one, although it showed no rust. The brim was extremely narrow and although the crown was large it was somewhat crowded by the square head.

"There may be rooms to let inside his head," Lillian giggled, "but there are certainly none to spare inside his hat!"

Winifred drew back into the room murmuring, her thoughts reverting to the captain of the football team. "Can't you just see him going through Cornell's center? I do hope Landon gets hold of him first thing." And leaving Lillian still regarding the stranger with amused eyes, she returned to the typewriter.

Mrs. Forest and Alpha Gamma together were smoothing her way financially this year so far as tuition and board went. Her spending money the chancellor was only too glad to supply in exchange for office work which the girl's nimble hands and wits made so smooth for him. And so it came about that she aided the regular stenographer during many spare hours, the busy chancellor finding work enough for them both.

Presently, having finished a paper, she arose with a perplexed brow. "I'll be back in a moment, Lillian," she said abstractedly; "I think there is some mistake here, and I am going to hunt up Professor Adams."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

It was considerably more than a minute before she came down the stairs from the third floor where she had found the head of the English department. The door of the public office was open, and she heard voices, the registrar's and a strange voice, deep and clear, but not loud. With her eyes still on the paper which she held, she swung open the door of the private office noiselessly and entered, but, before she could speak, Lillian's hand was raised in warning and Lillian's face, flushed and strangely moved, was turned toward her from the half-open door between the two offices.

"Square" was the word which Lillian's lips formed as she motioned with her head toward the public office. She was frankly listening with all her might.

Winifred paused and listened also.

"If you can't take my note for the tuition," the square young man was saying, "will you take service, then? Isn't there something I can do? Anything? I'll shovel paths——"

"We do that by horse power," interrupted the registrar.

"Shovel coal and ashes——"

"The janitor has his men for that selected now."

"Sweep the rooms here."

"But that goes with the coal and ashes. No—

A VALUABLE SECURITY

"I'm sorry," the registrar's tone was genuinely regretful, "but I can't provide a way out, and the chancellor isn't in the city. He left orders, positive orders, that I was not to accept any more notes for tuition. That is, of course, notes without sure endorsements. If you could produce a satisfactory endorser——"

There was a pause. Then the young man drew a long breath and his reply seemed to be pushed up with difficulty from the square toes of his shoes:

"I can't. I don't know a man within a hundred miles."

"I'm sorry," the registrar repeated, adding to fill a pause, "The tuition is remarkably small—only one hundred a year. That doesn't compare with the older colleges."

"No—but if you have not the hundred and don't see any way of earning it——" The girls heard the speaker back slowly toward the door. When he spoke again it was not a direct continuance of the subject of tuition. "I have wasted four weeks already, because I couldn't leave my job ——"

"If you've been working all summer, why ——" The registrar began with an asperity which did not conceal his sympathy.

The interruption was quiet. "I was paying off

A JUNIOR CO-ED

prep school debts. They took my note there, and I wanted to fix things up right with them before I came here."

The registrar spoke awkwardly. "I'd like uncommonly well to help you, and if Chancellor Haight were here he might make an exception—but I am acting under orders."

"Of course." There was a note in the voice which brought tears to Lillian's shining eyes—a note of deep grief over an unexpected defeat. Then the tone swelled proudly. "I'm not begging, understand—all I want is a chance to work—just a chance to work," and the door of the registrar's office closed abruptly.

Lillian turned. There were tears on her long lashes. Her cheeks were red and her eyes filled with a purpose which she found difficult to express owing to a catch in her voice.

"If you had heard it all," she began and ended abruptly. "He's splendid, Winifred ; come on."

Throwing open the door she presented herself unceremoniously before the surprised registrar.

Winifred followed asking in an apprehensive whisper, "What are you going to do?" It was an apprehension born of an intimate knowledge of Lillian's ways, especially when she was laboring under such emotion as now held her in bondage.

The registrar was bending over a huge ledger

A VALUABLE SECURITY

lying on the long desk that cut the room in two. Behind him stood the safe, its door swung wide. Beside the safe a window looked down on the campus and Fourth Avenue.

"I listened," announced Lillian excitedly. "I'm glad I heard it all, and I think it's awful that you can't take his note."

The registrar was a middle-aged man afflicted with corn colored hair which threatened to rise as he straightened himself and stared at Lillian, whose presence in the private office he had not hitherto suspected.

"Awful?" he repeated, backing up as she advanced impetuously.

"Yes, and it's awful that any one can't go to college who wants to badly enough to scrub floors; and here I have loads of spending money and—and an idea. He shan't leave; I won't have it. Won't this do for the tuition?"

The registrar backed against the wall and there stopped perforce while his eyes traveled down to Lillian's hand, which she was holding out to him with something grasped in the fingers.

"Won't this do?" she insisted. "Father said I could raise money on it any time, and this is the time I want to raise it, for the tuition. Or not exactly that, but if you take the ring for the tuition and promise not to tell any one, especially the

A JUNIOR CO-ED

square young man, then I can save my spending money and pay the tuition and redeem the ring. Won't that do?"

By degrees the registrar recovered far enough to receive the investment ring which Lillian's father never dreamed would be put to such a use.

"You better think it over," he stammered, and then if——" He stopped and looked rather helplessly at Winifred.

"If I should stop to think it over, I should never do it," declared Lillian truthfully, on the verge of tears. "I'm too selfish. I have never done anything for anybody—that is, anything big like this. And he'll never know—that would be so embarrassing—and no one will know except just us three—and the chancellor."

At this point, Winifred, toward whom the registrar continued to look, reinforced Lillian's arguments. Winifred was quite carried away by the other's impulsive helpfulness and by deep sympathy with the boy who came to Huntingdon only to find his path unexpectedly blocked.

"You can accept his note, or tell him that you have decided to draw on a fund which has been provided," she began eagerly. "That will be the truth, and he need never know—I don't know why Lil—that is, Miss Antwerp, should not do it if she wishes. When he pays his note you can

A VALUABLE SECURITY

repay her. I am sure the chancellor would allow her ——”

Still dazed, the registrar relieved Lillian's agitation by the admission that the plan, although unusual, was entirely feasible. “I don't know when I've been so reluctant to turn a man down,” he mused as he put the ring in an envelope and ran his tongue absently along the edge of the flap. “He appears to have good stuff in him. I am uncommonly glad we can have him —— Now I'll just give you a receipt for the ring and deposit it in the safe and ——”

“Evenin' News here. Two cents,” announced a shrill voice at the door.

Newsy entered frankly snuffling. “Want a paper, sir?”

The registrar nodded absently. “In a minute.”

Newsy leaned against the desk, and watched the trio behind it with wide, sharp eyes.

The registrar was writing on the envelope, when an exclamation from Winifred caused him to turn. She was staring at him with an anxious gaze.

“His name?” she gasped, “the young man's name?”

The envelope slipped through the registrar's fingers. “I have not the remotest idea—nor his address. My surprise has surely deprived me of my wits!”

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred flew to the window and peered out in the gathering dusk. The registrar and Lillian were at her elbow.

"There he goes!" Lillian cried. "See him? Down the avenue, going slowly. Oh, how shall we ——"

Winifred did not wait for her to finish her sentence. "Quick, Newsy, catch him. Tell him the registrar wants to see him."

The child dashed in through the swinging gate at one end of the desk. "Which one d'ye want?" he yelled, pushing among them to the window.

Winifred pointed out the squarely built form slowly receding down the street, and Newsy was out of the door in a flash. Half-way down the stairs, however, Lillian's voice reached him, and a silver quarter fell at his feet, accompanied by a "Hurry, now."

Newsy hurried. He sprang down the steps, raced down the walk, and stopping at the entrance to Fourth Avenue, lifted up his voice, sending it forth through cupped hands. "Hi, there! He-e-y! —Be ye d-e-e-f? Come along back here! The registrar wants t' see ye agin."

A moment after Newsy resumed in a minor key, as he trudged along College Road, "News here, Evenin' News. More'n yer money's worth—News, mister?"

A VALUABLE SECURITY

Half an hour later Winifred and Lillian crept out of the private office and through the dark halls. Softly they passed the closed door of the public office behind which came a murmur of voices, one buoyantly hopeful. Down the stairs they tiptoed, but once on the campus, they took hold of hands and ran toward the chapter house like two children, protected by the darkness. At the house door, Lillian paused out of breath.

"‘Sayles Cooper,’" she mused. "That's an odd name, isn't it? I wish we could have overheard all the conversation, don't you?"

The girls were at dinner, and as the two entered the dining-room, Flossie at once spied the bare third finger of Lillian's right hand.

"Why, Lillian Antwerp!" she exclaimed. "Where's your ring?"

With a little gasp of dismay at the question Winifred sat down, her eyes on Lillian's face. That young lady, however, was equal to the occasion, being unexpected in more ways than one.

"It's too valuable for me to be wearing around all the time," she replied easily, "so I asked the registrar if he wouldn't put it in the safe. It's there now. Please give me the white meat, Reb; I don't eat the wings, you know."

CHAPTER II

ARMY BLUE

THE following morning Winifred, crossing the campus alone, bound for an early class, did not hear three short whistles, thrice repeated, from the direction of the Psi Upsilon Chapter House. Finally, Landon's voice calling a low, "Let a fellow catch up, won't you?" arrested her attention.

"Whatever is the matter with your ears?" he demanded, reaching her side breathlessly. "I've been giving the Alpha Gamma whistle clear across the campus."

"Well," retorted Winifred, "it happens to be an Alpha Gamma affair that makes me deaf this morning, and I'm afraid will make me dumb in trigonometry. Our cook has given warning. She goes in a week."

Landon laughed heartlessly. "And, as you are junior steward, it's up to you to furnish another cook, is it?"

"It is." Winifred looked up at him solemnly. "The present incumbent has been with us four weeks. She is going because she objects to having so young a 'boss' ——"

ARMY BLUE

"Meaning you?"

Winifred nodded. "Meaning me. She says I don't provide enough raw material; but I know I have provided enough to enable her to burn up six loaves of bread and other things in proportion while she has been reading books from our library. I remonstrated with her one day and oh, the scorn with which she said, 'And would you be havin' me an ignoramus, with so many books around?' I am glad to have her go, but—who will come? That's on my mind now."

Landon shrugged his broad shoulders and glanced sidewise at the fair head which barely reached the level of his ear. Seeing something very much to his liking in that glance he looked attentively, a puzzled expression creeping over his frank, sunburned face. The head looked unusually well that morning. This fact his masculine mind easily compassed, though what caused the improvement he did not at once fathom. The difference between a black velvet hat, ribbon trimmed, and a black beaver supporting a large plume was beyond the depths of his reasoning.

"I say, Winifred," he finally blurted out, "have you got on a new hat or haven't you?"

"Have I or haven't I?" repeated Winifred in a disgusted tone. "If that isn't the man of it!"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

determination not to miss a single feature of this new life into which he had wedged himself with such difficulty.

"It was a queer thing for Lillian to do," Winifred told herself as she closed the door. "She's so impulsive—but I'm right down glad it's done."

At the inner door she was seized by the Sin Twisters, each Twister armed with a copy of the college periodical, *The Huntingdon Weekly*, which was being distributed at the head of the stairs.

"Here's the reason it is twenty-four hours late," explained Erma Cunningham on one side, holding her paper so near Winifred's eyes that all she could see was a blur of black and white. On the other side Clara Pike was reading aloud from the first page editorial.

"The idea ought to gain ground in college circles and grow until it develops into a general movement. If each organization should pledge itself to found a scholarship we ——"

Erma withdrew her paper, but continued to talk heedless of Clara's reading. "The editorial is M. Gussie's and it's fine, but oh, dear! It would mean more sacrifice and more begging and everything else, because, of course, if all the fraternities and sororities take up the notion, we shouldn't want Alpha Gamma to be one dollar behind, but

ARMY BLUE

I shall tell Landon Stearns exactly what I think of him nevertheless for starting such a thing."

"Girls, what is this all about?" demanded Winifred turning from one to the other.

"The chancellor thinks we need more scholarships for poor students, and he went and interested Landon Stearns in the project," Erma's voice contained a note of personal resentment, "and then Landon went home and interested the Psi U's, and then some one, presumably Beau Brown, got M. Gussie on the war-path, and here is her editorial on the subject. I can just see the appeals that our alumnæ will make to the active chapter to keep up our end in the matter, and it will take all the money we can rake and scrape together for a year or more."

"And that will mean an English cloth coat for me instead of the handsome broadcloth that I want," chimed in Clara, who always talked like a miser and acted like a philanthropist.

Finally Winifred got at the root of the matter. It seemed that a few days before Landon had gone to interview the chancellor on a matter connected with football, whereupon the chancellor had, in turn, interested him in the needs of the college to such an extent that he had induced the active chapter of Psi Upsilon to vote the founding, by

A JUNIOR CO-ED

personal effort, of a scholarship during the ensuing year. Then, exactly in the way Erma had guessed, the literary editor of The Huntingdon News hearing of the matter had delayed the paper one day in order to write a stirring editorial on the subject—and M. Gussie could be stirring under all circumstances.

"Landon will be as surprised as any one when he sees it," added Erma, "for Gussie says he doesn't think that any one outside of Psi U knows what they have done."

Winifred, reading the editorial as she went, mounted slowly to the third floor and almost fell over M. Gussie Barker attempting to convert Beau Brown to the views of the political insurgents.

M. Gussie was fresh from Omaha and a lecture tour, whereon her gifted and somewhat erratic mother was the lecturer. Under such distinguished chaperonage, M. Gussie had been admitted to the councils of the advanced in thought and had returned to Huntingdon charged with new ideas.

"M. Gussie has broken out in a new spot," Winifred had telephoned to Louise Wallace the day college opened. "I'm afraid the summer has rubbed off all the good effects of last year."

"Let hope succeed despair," Louise had responded. "Her common sense fed on good Hunt-

ARMY BLUE

ingdon air will ultimately bring about her recovery ! ”

“ I am an insurgent in politics,” had been M. Gussie’s leading announcement to Huntingdon. “ Of course, just now that is not a popular stand to take but,” firmly, “ I have taken it—and so has mother. My sympathies are enlisted in good government that’s actually by the people and for them. I wonder that the spirit is not rampant in college to a greater extent. It ought to be talked up.”

Therefore M. Gussie proceeded to talk it up, but Winifred presently noticed with relief that her voice was the voice of the subdued M. Gussie, and her manner, although positive, was more quiet and gentle than when she had first dawned on the collegiate horizon. The good work of the previous year, although dulled, was not destroyed. The best proof of this lay in the fact that the fastidious Beau, who had shown a decided preference for her society during the latter part of his sophomore year, still sought her, and was even evincing symptoms of insurgency, whereas he had voted once—being but twenty-one—the straight old line ticket.

When Winifred appeared, M. Gussie turned away from Beau Brown and joined her.

“ Gussie, this is great,” exclaimed Winifred

A JUNIOR CO-ED

warmly, referring to the editorial. "You have made me enthusiastic over scholarships myself."

"Uh-huh," returned M. Gussie carelessly. She was curiously reticent and diffident over the things she could do really well. It was only over subjects which she but partially understood that she "ranted."

"If only I could write as well and convincingly as ——" Winifred began, but was not allowed to finish.

"Yes," hastily, "thank you—Winifred, your hat looks extremely well on you. Is—is mine at all becoming?"

It was the new Gussie who spoke, and who turned her dark head slowly about to enable Winifred to view the broad-brimmed cream-colored satin adorned only by two black wings.

"The idea is great," announced Winifred enthusiastically, "but if you'd bend the front brim a bit—so it would sort of scoop down over your nose, I think it would be awfully becoming."

And M. Gussie, forgetful of insurgency, whispered as they entered the class room, "Scoop it before chapel, won't you? We can go into the cloak-room after class."

M. Gussie had decided to become a "regular," that is, to endure, in the regular classical course, the afflictions of such studies as she deemed wholly



"IS MINE AT ALL BECOMING?"

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R

THE NEW FORT

usages in the way she had made a point.
Trigonometry was one of the subjects.

- I never expect to see you again, my dear.
for M. G. and the other girls were
fortunate - but I shall be glad to see you.
The only thing I can get out of it - even the
sible thing - is a mental decision.

Therefore will the fact of a party be announced.
mental decision and I shall be glad to see you.
other - but I shall be glad to see you.
expressing my pleasure in being with you.
Winifred - my dear - the fact of a party be announced.
ingly, and the fact of a party be announced.
to attend a party - my dear - the fact of a party be announced.
president of the board of trustees.

The fact was that the fact of a party be announced.
transit, therefore the fact of a party be announced.
Winifred's and the fact of a party be announced.
and reviewed the fact of a party be announced.
leaving Winifred the fact of a party be announced.
walking and the fact of a party be announced.
herself doing the fact of a party be announced.

Just in the fact of the two girls were
Stearns and S. J. Cooper, talking earnestly
subject was evidently foolish.

"I think you could easily win a place
scrub this fall and be in line for the Three
next year," suggested the captain of the club.

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R

ARMY BLUE

useless. In this way she had become a junior. Trigonometry was one of the afflictions.

"I never expect to carry a chain," she grumbled, for M. Gussie did not endure such afflictions with fortitude, "nor measure the distance to the moon. The only thing I can get out of trig—except possible honors—is mental discipline."

Therefore, with the face of a martyr she acquired mental discipline and honors in trigonometry and other "useless" branches. But the martyr-like expression gave place to delight when, after class, Winifred "scooped" the hat brim most becomingly, and the two started toward the auditorium to attend chapel exercises and a speech from the president of the board of trustees.

The walk was too crowded to allow a rapid transit, therefore M. Gussie, with her hand on Winifred's arm to guide her, opened her note-book and reviewed her notes on mediæval history, thus leaving Winifred without other employment than walking—and listening, as she presently found herself doing.

Just in advance of the two girls were Landon Stearns and Sayles Cooper, talking earnestly. The subject was evidently football.

"I think you could easily win a place on the scrub this fall and be in line for the 'Varsity team next year," suggested the captain of the eleven.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

The other merely shook his head, on which reposed the old derby with its unfashionably large square crown.

"You're built for it, if ever I saw a man who was," Landon urged enthusiastically.

"Perhaps," replied Cooper slowly, "but I was also built for other—and more necessary things."

"But Huntingdon needs good athletes—men with nerve and backbone——"

Here Winifred lost the thread of the speech, catching only isolated words ending with "loyalty to the college."

"Whatever that is, it hurts," she decided watching the new student. He turned his head and cast a quick glance down the length of his companion, and Landon was looking particularly well, Winifred thought, in a handsome new overcoat—Cooper wore none.

"I wish," replied the latter slowly, "that I were at liberty to show loyalty to the college in that way, but—I can't. Perhaps I already have more grounds for loyalty now than you have"—here he glanced again at the well-groomed man beside him—"but, loyalty or no loyalty, I must get my exercise another way. If I stay here it's necessary that I put myself in training for shoveling coal and ashes and sweeping walks and beating

ARMY BLUE

rugs. You can see—I haven't the time to put on athletics of any kind."

There was no shrinking in the boy's tone or manner. He stated the situation in a grim, matter-of-fact way, a sort of a way which said, "I am what I am, and must do what I must; and that's all there is about it, with no excuses to make."

Winifred could hear no more, but as the two approached a crowd of students on the drive in front of the auditorium, she was glad to see Landon lay his hand on the shorter man's shoulder and begin to introduce him to the "fellows."

"Landon can never know, as I do," she thought, "how it hurts to have to do things differently from the others."

Here M. Gussie closed her note-book and came back from mediæval times with a start. "I never tire of going through this building," she said as they made their way through the gathering crowd of students. "It's all so big and roomy and imposing—just the building that Mrs. Forest would naturally put up."

There were long high corridors and broad winding stairs and well-lighted class rooms and wide reception rooms fitted for large public social functions, and lastly, the great audience hall, an architectural triumph with its mural decorations, its arched ceiling, its handsome pipe-organ and its

A JUNIOR CO-ED

long rows of stationary chairs, the number of which gave evidence of the builder's faith in the growth of her alma mater.

A carriage rolled up the driveway, stopping in front of the main entrance. And as Chancellor Haight alighted followed by a short, stockily built man past middle age, at a signal from one of the seniors, the men thronging the lower hall ranged themselves to right and left, leaving an open passage between their ranks. Through this passage the chancellor and his guest moved, the face of the latter lighting with pleasure at the honor paid him, while behind him, led by the voices of the chapel quartet, swelled the song :

“ Oh, Huntingdon, Alma Mater, dear,
Honor is thine and thy sons all revere
Thy memory and thy spread of fame,
Oh, Huntingdon ! Noble is thy name.”

Then, as Mr. Perry reached the head of the stairs leading to the chapel, came the questions which made the great building echo with its ring.

“ Who gave us the stadium ? ”

The answer outdid the question in volume.

“ Perry. He gave, he gave, he gave the stadium.”

“ Who's all right ? ”

“ Perry. He is, he is, he is all right.”

ARMY BLUE

M. Gussie's eyes shone. She grasped Winifred's arm with uncomfortably tense fingers. "I know he is fine," she exclaimed with conviction, "but I wonder if he is an Insurgent!"

As Winifred slipped into seat thirty in the junior row near the chapel platform, Lillian Antwerp dropped into her number, thirty-one, and whispered jubilantly, "To-day is my allowance day, so I can begin right off to redeem the ring." She snuggled down close to Winifred in her affectionate way, adding, "Isn't it nice and creepy to have a little real secret that must not get out? I'm so glad, dear, it's you that shares it with me, for I shall depend on you to make me lay aside fifteen dollars of my allowance each month." Then without the least change in tone, or any break in her voice, "Is Army Blue here? That's a new name I have for our square young man. Have you seen him?"

"With Landon," whispered Winifred. "Look back and over three rows," and she forthwith gave her attention to the platform, where Dean Holbrooke was welcoming Mr. Perry.

The latter carried in his hand a copy of The Huntingdon News, and as he sat down he leaned toward the dean and called his attention to the first page editorial. With the paper still in his hand he rose to address the students at the end of

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the devotional exercises. Resting one elbow on the desk, he spoke with a low, clear voice in a conversational manner. But, despite his quietness, his opening sentences sent a ripple of audible surprise through the chapel.

"I pity the student who comes to college with a pocketful of money. The chances of success are against him. He is handicapped from the start. He is deprived of half the zest of living, and more than half the incentive to action. If I could, I would give every young man a chance to work"—here Lillian's foot came against Winifred's violently—"and then leave him to carve out his own future."

"If only you would look at Army Blue," she wrote in underscored words on her tablet for Winifred's benefit. "His eyes are as large as butter plates and shine awfully."

Winifred did not look around, but her heart swelled with a sympathy which it was impossible for Lillian, accustomed to plenty, to feel. Winifred had always in memory the hardships of her freshman year, and she could understand the attitude of the poverty-stricken but determined "Army Blue," to whom Mr. Perry's words were an inspiration, coming from a man who had overcome poverty and turned obstacles into advantages.

ARMY BLUE

Following this train of thought she missed a change in the speaker's theme until a thundering volley of cheers brought her back to the present, and she realized that Mr. Perry was reading from M. Gussie's editorial, and making sundry observations which were not failing to please the faculty on the platform as well as the student body and the numerous alumni who had come up from the city to greet the president of the trustees and the builder of the noble stadium in process of erection on the back campus.

He was interested, it seems, in the scheme which Landon had started with no thought of its going beyond the walls of the Psi Upsilon Chapter House—so interested that he made a surprising announcement.

"I'll double the number of scholarships," he said in his slow, quiet way. "You found one and I'll put another beside it. You found ten and I'll give another ten. It matters not to me how the money is raised, whether by individual appeals, by clubs, by fraternities, by sororities, by classes. Nor does it matter how many you establish—my offer holds good."

Behind him Dean Holbrooke, white-headed and revered by the students, arose suddenly, drawing a handkerchief from his hip pocket. As if by magic the great body of students were on their

A JUNIOR CO-ED

feet, while above their heads surged a storm of white linen. Simultaneously the quartet, from their end of the platform, unbidden, led in the favorite college song, whose refrain rose, swelled by hundreds of voices :

“ Oh, Huntingdon, for thee,
May thy sons be leal and loyal
To thy memory.”

That evening Lillian interrupted an animated discussion at the dinner table to remark irrelevantly, “ I’m sure I don’t know why, but I found the tears rolling down my cheeks while I was waving my handkerchief, but as I couldn’t cry into it and wave it at the same time, I had to stop crying.”

“ First aid to the laundry,” retorted Rebecca Bicknell, “ but to resume and continue on, as Samantha Allen says, how are we going to raise two thousand dollars if we do decide to found a scholarship ? ”

“ Let time and the alumnæ answer for us,” returned Flossie Rogers flippantly calling for a second piece of pie.

“ When my allowance comes —— ” began Lillian enthusiastically, and then paused quickly glancing at Winifred. She had temporarily forgotten that her allowance was mortgaged.

ARMY BLUE

"There's the postman," announced Belle Eaton as the outer door swung open and a hand appeared conveying a number of letters to a small table which stood just inside the door. "That means it's eight o'clock. I hope our next cook will lean further toward promptness than literature."

Lillian struggled to her feet, fork in hand. "I'll go," she said to the maid. "Excuse me," she called over her shoulder, "but I can never wait a moment before getting my hands on my allowance. I'll bring the mail to the rest of you."

The occupants of her table commanded a view of the hall, and Winifred saw Lillian open her letter with a beaming face, read it with a startled expression, and return to the dining-room slowly, a dazed look in her eyes. She distributed the other letters with none of her usual comments, and as she dropped a postal beside Winifred's plate, she stooped and whispered, "I want to see you right after dinner."

But before the belated dinner ended, the letter was forgotten as the maid ushered into the front parlor a young man wearing a heavy dark mustache, and brought his card to Lillian. For once, to the delight of the Sin Twisters, the recipient of the card was visibly agitated.

"Who is it?" Punch, sitting with her back to the hall door, asked with her lips but not her voice.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"The smoke of the battle cleared away sooner than I expected," she laughed, "and Cousin Anne, having come out victorious, is in such a peaceful frame of mind that she instantly suggested that I lend you 'Sairy' Mary Betts until I need her in April. You know Sairy Mary is an old neighbor of Cousin Anne, and has consented to rule my household—when I shall have one to rule. Now if she would consent to go to you—would it help you out to have her till April?"

"Indeed it would!" sighed Winifred in a relieved tone, and hung up the receiver.

CHAPTER III

SAIRY MARY

WINIFRED occupied a single room, which, though sunny, was rather cramped in dimensions. It was regularly devoted to the use of the junior stewardess who attended to the supplies and finances of the household in return for her room and board. There was a couch bed which served by day as a window-seat in front of the double windows; a tiny desk quite suited to the present stewardess' size; an easy chair in whose capacious depths she was nearly lost; a pretty rug which Mrs. Forest had transplanted from the house on Fourth Avenue; a chiffonier with some small pieces of furniture both useful and ornamental.

It was, as Rebecca Bicknell said, the coziest room in the house for confidences, and confidences abounded so long as Winifred occupied it. So popular was the little room, in fact, that in self-defense its occupant had constructed a large sign which during her busy hours hung outside her door. It read in letters large and plain :

NO ENTRANCE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"It's not put there," observed Punch, "so that 'he who runs may read,' but that he who reads may run!"

To this room at a late hour came Lillian, clad in her kimono, with her hair falling over her shoulders, and tapped on the door although the darkened transom told her that Winifred had gone to bed.

"I know I ought not to come in," she confessed as a sleepy voice bade her enter. "But I'm in such loads of trouble, and I couldn't come before. You see Mr. Wright stayed until eleven, and because he's a member of the faculty I could not tell him he was smashing a strict house rule all to atoms—could I?"

She lighted the gas and, curling up comfortably in the big chair, drew a letter from the pocket of her kimono.

"Does the load of trouble come from the instructor or from that letter?" asked Winifred still sleepy.

"Mr. Wright?" Lillian's tone was full of scorn. "Well, no! If I could get along with trouble as easily as with Mr. Wright I'd not complain."

"Is he nice?"

"Awfully nice—and he knows it!" Lillian unfolded the letter. "He needs a few lessons in humbleness."

Winifred laughed, thoroughly awakened now.

SAIRY MARY

"I foresee that the lessons will be forthcoming and ——" here her eyes fell on the letter and her tone changed. Arising on one elbow she began, "Oh, yes, I remember; it's from your father ——"

Lillian nodded until her hair fell over her face. "The trouble came in this letter, and I knew I couldn't sleep until I rolled it off on you. Isn't that charitable?"

"What has happened?"

"Something awful!" impressively.

"What?"

"I don't know. It's awful viewed in the light of its results. You know the old saying, 'It never pours but it rains'?"

Winifred forebore a correction.

"It's raining in my direction right now." Lillian held up the letter. "You know I was, of course, calculating on my usual allowance this month, and expected to take fifteen dollars up to the registrar to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Well, here's the check for the month—only fifteen dollars altogether! Now, whatever am I to do?"

"But the reason?" asked Winifred.

Lillian turned the light higher. "Father despises letter writing, and so all he says is this: 'I am sending you a much smaller allowance this

A JUNIOR CO-ED

month for reasons which take too much time to explain. You must economize, for I can send no more now. I have been making some investments lately—and at times I am convinced that the best way to treat money is to put it into a sock and hide it in the fireplace, or else invest it in jewels, as I did for you.' Now, Winifred, what do you make out of that letter?"

"I am afraid he has been losing money," replied Winifred gravely.

"Oh, dear! I shall not dare tell him that my investment ring is all tied up. He would be simply furious. You see, Winifred, father is awfully generous to me—but not—not to every one."

Winifred assented understandingly.

"It's the most dreadful situation——" Lillian began again. "But I'm not a bit sorry I did it—not a bit! I met Army Blue this afternoon," the mournful note dropped out of her voice, "and do you know, before I thought that I had really never met him, I bowed!" She sat up with an engaging display of dimples. "He looked so astonished and pleased, and if he didn't pull that old derby off his head at a great rate! I like his head," musingly. "It's more like Daniel Webster's than Mr. Wright's—much more. But isn't it funny to think I should have bowed to him?"

Winifred sank back into her pillows, and spoke

SAIRY MARY

out of the depths of her knowledge of Lillian. "Not if you really wanted to—no."

"But I don't do everything I want to," argued Lillian, "or I should be redeeming my ring. Winifred, what can I do about it?"

For a moment Winifred lay in silence gazing at the little nickel clock which was ticking its way toward midnight. "Suppose you don't do or say or write anything about it now. The ring is safe and, as long as it's in the possession of the registrar, he won't be worrying about the tuition. Just await developments. Perhaps the next letter from your father will set things right again."

Lillian arose briskly. "It's so much easier to do nothing than something," she sighed, happily logical. "Of course, everything will come out right in the end. It always does where you are concerned, and I know you will see me through with this thing," and with trouble nearing the vanishing point, she kissed Winifred good-night and departed humming under her breath a gay little air.

Lillian appeared to be as irresponsible as the air and the birds and the sunshine—and was as welcome as all three wherever she went. Still humming softly she made her way down the dark hall, the possible complications attendant on her impulsively generous act pushed far into the back-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

ground by the memory of Army Blue's square face frankly aglow because of her bow.

"I wonder how it would feel to be able to throw care off in that way," thought Winifred, and fell asleep again only to dream of "Sairy" Mary Betts and the culinary department.

The following day, being Saturday, she sallied forth to interview Mrs. Anne Sweet on the subject, and incidentally get a view of such parts of Louise Wallace's trousseau as were in process of construction.

Mrs. Sweet sat hemming towels in front of the sitting-room window in her old-fashioned wood-colored frame house, which, entrenched behind its picket-fenced yard, threw defiance at its imposing stone and brick neighbors, and boldly displayed its sign, the only one of the kind in the neighborhood, "Rooms to Let." The face of the owner, seen through the old-fashioned high window, partook of the grim, weather-beaten aspect of the house, but Winifred well knew how kind a heart beat under the stiff tight waists which seemed to add to the rigidity of the spine that had served Mrs. Sweet so well for sixty-five years.

The click of the little gate caused her to glance severely from her sewing out over her spectacles. But when she saw Winifred, the severity faded, and her wrinkled face broke up into smiles.

SAIRY MARY

Rapping smartly on the window she motioned toward the door and then went on with her towel hemming. She was at work, as she would have explained, on Louise's "trooseau."

That young lady was not visible when Winifred opened the door, but a voice from the hall above greeted her in running rhymes while Louise's dark head appeared over the bannisters and Louise's dark eyes surveyed her approvingly.

"Who's down-stairs
Free from cares,
Putting on airs,
With a hat of black,
And of beauty no lack,
For adornment a knack ——"

"For pity sakes, Louisy," called Mrs. Sweet loudly from the sitting-room, "shut up and give me a chance to say somethin' a little sensible."

Louise's eyes danced, but her voice was suspiciously grave as she replied, "Being so politely urged I'll gracefully yield the conversational flow to my cousin. Later, when I have undergone the tortures of a skirt hanging, we will go forth to finish the conquest of Sarah Mary Betts. Cousin Anne has already made an excellent beginning of said conquest."

"Sairy Mary is one to listen to a sensible talker," confirmed Mrs. Sweet complacently.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Then, as the sound of the sewing-machine took the place of Louise's mocking voice, she grumbled, "Winifred, it does seem as if that girl can't learn sense."

"I hope she never can," breathed Winifred fervently, as she removed her coat and left it hanging in the hall.

"I was sure," continued Mrs. Sweet, "that college would take some of the nonsense out of her, but, land! She got worse right along. Then I thought teaching would sort of take off the sharp edge, like, of her foolishness, but it didn't do a mite of good. She's just Louisy still, and takes after her father's side wonderfully. There's no nonsense in her mother's family—— I'm on that side, you know!"

Winifred smilingly assented, knowing that Mrs. Sweet was devoted to that same "Louisy," with her foundation of sound judgment and her superstructure of frothy beguiling nonsense. But, with the cares of the Alpha Gamma kitchen on her mind, Winifred hastened to turn her hostess' attention Betts-ward.

Sarah Mary, it appeared, was an independent householder on the Green Valley Road a few miles out of Huntingdon, and a widow of longstanding, to the unbounded regret of sundry bachelors and widowers in various parts of the country round about.

SAIRY MARY

"Land sakes!"—Mrs. Sweet laid aside the towel and picked up her knitting that she might talk to the accompaniment of the flying needles, "there ain't a mite of use of Sairy Mary stayin' in the mournin' state unless she wants to. There's them that's anxious to have her take her weeds off for them, but she always did know her own business, Sairy Mary did, and nobody can tell her anything——"

Winifred sat up in alarm. She was listening to an account of Mrs. Betts from the angle of house stewardess. "Won't she be willing to be directed as our cook?"

The knitting-needles flew derisively, while Mrs. Sweet viewed her caller tolerantly over her glasses. "Just show Sairy Mary the lay of the land up there to the house, and then you can go off and go to sleep and things'll seem to run themselves. Don't you worry none, and don't go to lettin' any one set down on her. Sairy Mary never was set on, and I don't know how she would stand it. You know she ain't obliged to work out, but loves to cook that bad that she'd rather fix things to eat than to eat 'em herself. And the more she has to cook for the better she likes it. She wouldn't hear to goin' with Louisy until she got it through her head that Mr. Gray is a strong eater. Then she said she'd try it. But, land!" with a delighted

A JUNIOR CO-ED

little chuckle, "she thinks her two eyes of Louisy."

Winifred leaned back and drew a long breath. "If she loves to cook, she will be in clover at the chapter house, because we all have such appetites!"

"Exactly what I told her." Mrs. Sweet sat bolt upright, wielding her knitting-needles vigorously. "I set you out in good shape to her. I told her you was as sensible a parcel of girls as she could find. Of course she knows as well as I do that that ain't sayin' much these days. Girls ain't what they used to be; but then we've got to put up with that. But as I was sayin', Sairy Mary has chances. She was a Davis before she was a Betts, and the Davises was old neighbors of ours. Sairy Mary I used to trot on my knee when her ma had to come to town. And land! she begun to have steadies almost before she stopped bein' trotted. They do say that Mose Carter wanted her so bad he's never married, but I can't say how true that is. I know he used to wait on 'er before ——"

Here Louise appeared in the doorway. "You'll be obliged," she interrupted seriously, "to bring your discourse to an end, Cousin Anne, because mine is about to begin. I know that Winifred is pining away to see my clothes."

SAIRY MARY

"Clothes? Huh!" Mrs. Sweet's tone was scornful. "Not a sensible dress in the hull parcel. Just a mass of frills and furbelows. When I got married I had a book-muslin for best and a couple of new calicoes and my mother's silk wedding dress made over. That was my trooseau."

"But, Cousin Anne," argued Louise gravely, "I can't afford cotton dresses because of the laundry bills. It's much cheaper now to dress in silk."

"In my day," snapped Mrs. Sweet, "there wa'n't no laundry bills. We done our own washing and ironing."

"Oh, those horrid, horrid 'good old times,'" sighed Louise as she led the way up-stairs. "I'm so glad a kind Providence saw fit to reserve me until the degenerate nowadays."

The hall door opened, and Winifred glanced back in time to see a young man clad in an army blue suit enter and begin the ascent of the stairs.

"Louise Wallace," she whispered clutching the other's arm, "does he room here?"

Louise glanced carelessly back. "Surely. It's a boy by the name of Sayles Cooper. He boards himself in your old room, and Cousin Anne is morally certain he is going to starve himself. She says she can see that he has shrunk already."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Isn't it queer," thought Winifred as Louise opened her clothes-press door, "how things get all mixed up?"

"That boy has won Cousin Anne's heart," Louise continued from the depths of the clothes-press, "by wiping his feet outside the door until I'm afraid he'll wear his soles out—and they look none too thick now."

An hour later, the two girls left the trolley at the end of the Green Valley division and, walking across a field, arrived at the little trim green cottage wherein lived Sarah Mary Betts. Tied securely to the fence in front of the cottage was a restless span of iron gray horses, sleek and perfectly matched, and as the girls toiled up the slope to the front door, the door opened and a man emerged, his face browned and reddened by the sun and winds of fifty years, his tall figure unbowed, his clothes heavy but fitting well, the trouser legs being stuffed into fine leather boots with red tops. Unhitching the iron grays with jerky movements indicative of boundless vexation, he climbed into a buggy which fairly radiated newness, and drove away on noiseless rubber tires.

"One of Sairy Mary's belated 'steadies,' I take it," whispered Winifred, and Louise had but time to return the name, "Moses Carter," when the door opened, and they stood in the presence of

S AIRY M A R Y

Sarah Mary herself. She drew Louise inside and with a radiant face bestowed a resounding smack on either cheek and then turned smilingly toward Winifred.

Mrs. Betts was very short and breathlessly fat. When she talked she caught her breath frequently, especially in the middle of a word, which habit gave to her conversation the effect of observing hyphens in words of more than one syllable.

"You bet-ter take this chair," she told Winifred. "It's more com-fortable than that high one."

"Comfort" was the key-note of Mrs. Betts' life. She was a hard worker, but a comfortable one. She was comfortable from the loosely twisted knot of hair which slid around on top of her head to the slippers that she habitually wore—slippers which defeated corns and allowed her feet to "spread." Her waist was defined only by her apron strings. Her collar was roomy, and her skirt pulled up in front and fastened with a safety-pin to prevent her stepping on the hem.

This air of comfort extended to the room with its bright rag carpet and flowered wall paper. Stretched out in front of the stove was a large lazy black cat. Swinging itself in the window, a canary picked at a piece of bread wedged between the wires of its cage.

"Law, yes," Mrs. Betts said to Winifred, "I'll

A JUNIOR CO-ED

come and try it a spell with you, if you want me. But I'll tell you right now that I ain't what you can call a good cook. I know good cook-ing when I set my teeth in-to it, but I haven't the knack myself."

Louise turned to the bewildered Winifred gravely, and took this disparaging discourse out of Sarah Mary's mouth. "That's true, Winifred. Mrs. Betts, furthermore, hates to cook and never has any variety on her table. As you see, she is underfed, and so is everything about her. Look at the cat. You can see at a glance how anæmic it is."

Winifred began to dimple in understanding appreciation, while Louise continued :

"Last year I recollect that Mr. Carter told Cousin Anne that the pig had died of apoplexy."

"That's all Mose Carter knows," interrupted Mrs. Betts. "Men don't abound in common sense—but then they're as the Lord made 'em, and ain't to blame as I know of. How-somever, Miss Lowe, I'll come, if you can put up with me, and if," here she paused and looked at Winifred hard, "you've no objections to my carting Pete and Druisy along with my house plants."

"Pete and Druisy?" repeated Winifred.

"Behold them." Louise suddenly scooped the fat cat into her lap. "This is Pete and there,"

SAIRY MARY

pointing to the bird cage, "is Druisy, who sings when by chance he is not eating or being coaxed to eat."

"Of course," assented Winifred. "The kitchen at the chapter house is large and sunny—but," looking doubtfully around Mrs. Betts' room, "it is not carpeted ——"

"Law! neither is mine," exclaimed Sarah Mary. "I wouldn't cook in a kitchen with a carpet."

As the girls were leaving, Mrs. Betts called after Louise, "Tell Mis' Sweet, Louisy, that Mose Carter was here to buy Em-my, but he didn't get her. Tell 'er I'll divide her after butch-erin' time and she can have half—and mebbly, as long as I'm goin' up there to cook, she might as well take her all."

"For pity sakes ——" murmured Winifred weakly.

Louise stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth and explained chokingly through its folds, "Emmy is the pig that did not have an apoplectic stroke."

The girls at the chapter house were absorbingly interested in their prospective cook.

"Is she addicted to literature?" demanded Adelaide Prell.

"All the literature I saw was the Bible and one of Mary J. Holmes' novels," replied Winifred.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Do you suppose she will allow us to make candy in the kitchen?" from Erma Cunningham to whom fudge was the staff of life.

"Perhaps—if you smile on her pets."

"If she doesn't want to kill Emmy," suggested Lillian suddenly, "she might keep her in our cellar and feed her out of the garbage pails." Lillian's acquaintance with Emmy's species was slight.

"The other kind of sell-'er is better for Emmy's health—and ours!" rejoined Punch blandly.

The week following, Emmy having been duly turned over to Mrs. Sweet to be committed to brine and transmuted into lard, Pete and Druisy were regularly installed in the big kitchen at the chapter house. Druisy's cage hung in the south window above the low broad cushioned rocker which had arrived in the express wagon, perched on top of Mrs. Betts' trunk.

"I al-ways carry my chair with me," she told Winifred who received her at the kitchen door. "No one has a chair with any comfort in it for me."

The night that Mrs. Betts first took the culinary helm in her plump hands, the girls filed promptly and anxiously into the dining-room the moment Janet rang the dinner bell. As the meal progressed they could scarcely restrain their desire to make remarks until the maid had left the room. Then Flossie demanded pugnaciously :

S A I R Y M A R R

"Will this sort of thing be kept up?"

"Mrs. Sweet and Louise say it will. They say that Sarah Mary Betts would rather cook than eat," replied Winifred.

"I wish that could be said of me," returned Flossie sighing, "and I wish we had our old cook back again on account of my dieting—I had just made up my mind to go back to crackers and milk. But how can I," pathetically, "in the face of such salads?" raising a forkful.

"Turn your back on 'em, then," advised Punch.

From the other table at this point came a bit of news concerning a subject which had been steadily growing in interest on the Hill since the morning the president of the board of trustees made his generous offer. It was Adelaide Prell who interrupted a further recital of Flossie's resolutions:

"By the way, girls, our alumnae gathered at Mrs. Bois' this afternoon to consider the matter of an Alpha Gamma scholarship. I met Mrs. Bois this morning down street, and she said that the alumni and friends of the college had been so drained of money during the last two years that, for her part, she didn't see where the money was coming from, but so long as there seems to be a general movement in that direction Alpha Gamma must do her part."

"That's so," assented Clara Pike. "The Kappa

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Kappa Gammas have voted to found one—did it last night at a special meeting, and we must not be behind them.”

“Three of the fraternities have voted to follow the example of Psi U,” contributed Belle Eaton, “and Beau Brown was perfectly astonished that we hadn’t taken any steps in the matter. He said Alpha Gamma was considered a leader in such things.”

“Of course we are,” snapped Clara Pike, “but it’s just give, give, give up here on this Hill all the time! The spirit’s in the atmosphere, someway. Last year my new muff went into our library furniture, and now I’m going down-town to-morrow and get a new party dress for fear it gets into a scholarship someway. If I had Lillian’s allowance, I’d feel differently,” she added, her glance falling on the young lady who had sat silently listening throughout the meal.

Winifred, who had noticed Lillian’s silence and wondered at the cause, now met her eyes with an understanding smile, whereupon Lillian raised her brows and rolled her eyes upward in a sign language, which, as Winifred interpreted it, meant that she wished another private interview.

Lillian’s desire for an interview rested on the fact that the morning’s mail had brought her a letter from her father which had banished her

SAIRY MARY

smiles and hidden her dimples for a longer time than ever before in her history.

"Winifred," she began in a tragic voice as soon as the door of the little room, bearing its sign, had swung shut after them, "Winifred, I'm poverty-stricken. It may be that I shall be as poor as Army Blue by and by. It's awful. Read this," thrusting the letter into the other's hands. "I never dreamed of anything as bad as this—oh, dear!" Putting her head on Winifred's shoulder she burst into tears, an unusual process for Lillian.

Winifred read the letter aloud, her face becoming graver with every word. "'I think that I shall be able to meet all your expenses until the first of the year,'" Mr. Antwerp wrote, "'if you are very careful. And when I say 'careful,' I am afraid I am talking in an unknown tongue to you. To come down to hard facts, I can allow you only fifteen dollars spending money a month.'"

"And, oh, Winifred," sobbed Lillian, "I've spent more than that every month on car-fare and candy! And how am I to get the ring back? But go on. Papa speaks about the ring."

"'It looks probable now,'" Winifred read, "'that you will be obliged to spend your Christmas vacation in Huntingdon'"—Lillian's home was in Chicago—"and, of course, if I am driven into a corner I can raise enough money on your

A JUNIOR CO-ED

ring to keep you in college. But I hope that will not be necessary, and, next year, I hope to be on my feet again.' ”

“ What shall I do about the ring? Papa will be so out of patience—and to think ”—laughing hysterically—“ that instead of paying it to help Army Blue I ought to have pawned it for myself. But it's so queer, Winifred—I can't be sorry I did it. I tried to be this morning after the letter came, you know, when I went up to class. And right in the hall stood that absurd boy with a burst of absurd gladness all over his face, waiting for me to speak to him—and I did it again, Winifred.” Lillian hesitated and then confessed, “ I not only bowed but I stopped and talked some to him—and I can't be sorry at all for what I have done, not even,” bravely, “ if I am obliged to leave college next semester.”

Winifred pressed the tearful face against her shoulder. “ But you'll not have to, dear. We shall find a way out about the ring, or a way, rather, to get the ring out of pawn. Now that 'Sairy' Mary Betts is reigning in the kitchen, I shall have time to do some thinking about your affairs. A way will surely open,” hopefully.

Lillian sat down and dried her eyes. “ If any one can open it you can,” she declared, glancing in the glass to see the extent of the damage done

SAIRY MARY

by her tears. "And if I don't go home Christmas he can't see that the ring isn't on my finger."

Then, suddenly, beneath wet lashes, the dimples appeared. "Army Blue has such nice eyes. They look at you straight and square—I wish he could go into training for football." It was impossible for the "blues" to abide long with Lillian.

Long after she was asleep, Winifred lay thinking about the ring, the state of its owner's finances, and her utter inexperience in business matters or cares attendant on the same. At last the thinker scrambled into a sitting posture and stared out of the window. The moonlight lay softly across the campus, weirdly enhancing the blackness of the shadows cast by the buildings and the foliage of the trees.

Clasping her arms about her knees she nodded emphatically. "I believe that plan is practical," she decided. "It would bring back the ring, at least, although she would be obliged to wait months for it. And no one would know whom she mortgaged it to help. All they need know was that it was done to help some student."

Snuggling down under her blankets warmly she made one more decision and then slept. That decision was not to tell Lillian her idea until further developments.

CHAPTER IV

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

THE spirit of enthusiasm in regard to the scholarship matter grew with the waning of October. A letter from Mr. Perry asking how soon he should be obliged to invest the money for the first duplicate scholarship fanned the flame of enthusiasm, and the race to be the first to report began. This friendly rivalry was further enhanced by a second letter which offered to found two scholarships for the first one reported by any group of students. By the time this letter was read in chapel all the Greek letter societies, and many of the eating clubs whose members did not belong to the Greek letters had voted to raise the required amount of money "by hook or by crook," as Inez Bedell, the stewardess of the Bee Hive, told Winifred.

The Bee Hive was a cheap boarding-house in which fifty girls took their frugal meals, and when Clara Pike learned that "by hook or by crook" they were going to attempt to raise two thousand dollars, she collected all the samples of lace and silk which she had been accumulating for the purpose of choosing an evening dress.

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

"I knew that idea'd get me if I didn't watch out!" she told her roommate sadly. "I must have a new coat, because I can't conscientiously freeze to death, but this little vanity of the spirit I can forego, I suppose."

"Not having your amount of spending money I don't see what I can forego at present unless it's fudge." Erma's tone was also gloomy.

Erma was apt, however, to be somber the day following too great a consumption of her favorite sweets. She named this disagreeable state "a fit of the blues," but her roommate laconically substituted a less romantic color in the one word, "biliousness!"

"I presume," said Clara, holding up a bit of filmy lace, and looking at it longingly, "that the Bees don't have fudge twice a year. They must be awfully poor." She dropped the lace slowly into the waste basket. "Inez Bedell told me that for breakfast each girl measures out two table-spoonfuls of cream—either on her oatmeal or in her coffee—but that's all she may have—just two. Isn't that awful?"

Erma shut her writing desk with a bang. "They ought to be thankful for the two spoonfuls. Inez weighs one hundred and thirty if she does a pound—she'd probably get to a hundred and fifty if she had all the cream she could eat!"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"My!" observed Clara consolingly as she picked up the basket and started toward the door. "You have it worse than usual to-day. I shall expect to see you a pale yellow by night."

Picking her way carefully down the steep dark back stairs, she opened the door into the roomy sunny kitchen and fell over Pete, who insisted on lying directly in front of the door. Like his mistress the girls had found that Pete was "not one to be stepped on" with impunity.

Sarah Mary greeted the intruder with a broad smile. Sarah Mary liked the chapter house, and all that pertained thereunto. She liked the trim little maid who regarded her with an awe born of the fact that she was the possessor of "houses and lands" the ownership of which she daily repudiated in song. She liked the students who came and sat in the kitchen and told her the college gossip and household news. She liked the white-haired chaperon, who never interfered with the kitchen management. She liked the blonde-haired and sweet-faced stewardess who deferred to her capable opinion on every point.

Therefore, when Clara fell over Pete she found Mrs. Betts rolling out cookie dough and singing in a wheezy tone, "I'm the Child of a King." She always sang doleful hymns, not because she felt doleful, but because the tune was always slow and

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

gave her an opportunity to catch her breath between the words.

With great interest she removed a lid of the stove and superintended Clara's sacrificial offering, her knob of hair slipping about on the top of her head, her waist comfortably open at the throat and her skirt pinned up so high in front that a pair of bright red stockings were visible half-way to her knees.

"I've got to be generous whether I want to be or not," Clara told her as the last sample turned into smoke, "and I can tell you I don't want to be one bit! I awfully want a pale blue foulard piped and trimmed with black. But mamma writes me that if I'm going to give toward the Alpha Gamma scholarship it must be out of my allowance—hence this conflagration."

"And why," asked Mrs. Betts, returning to her cookie dough, "should you give if you don't believe in giving?"

Clara stepped over Pete carefully. "It's the sorority spirit," she answered proudly. "I wouldn't have Alpha Gamma behind in any matter for anything." She paused, however, her hand on the stair door. "And, of course, scholarships are much needed things. One morning in chapel Chancellor Haight told us that he had been obliged to say 'no' to one hundred students who could have en-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

tered college this fall provided they could have received tuition free. All those went elsewhere, probably, where there are lots of free scholarships. Of course, we want Huntingdon to have everything that other colleges have."

Mrs. Betts nodded, her hair knob coming to a rest above her left eye. Then she corrected herself. "You do believe in giving, after all?"

"Of course I do, when it comes right down to the point." Clara drummed absently on the bottom of the waste basket. "And when I see the Bees giving and Gussie Barker taking such a load on herself, I feel sort of little, I tell you!"

M. Gussie had no inconsiderable share in strengthening the students' loyalty to their alma mater and their efforts to meet Huntingdon's needs. She outdid herself in the matter of effective editorials, each issue of the Huntingdon Weekly containing on its opening page an article of comment and exhortation so able and earnest that they occasioned more than a ripple of interest among the ranks of the faculty. Moreover, the editorials had additional weight when the announcement was made that the management of the Weekly had agreed to put its shoulder under one scholarship. Then the fact gradually leaked out that the announcement was due solely to M. Gussie, who had insisted on the step, but who also had made her-

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

self responsible for the entire amount, because the majority of the management, being members of other organizations intent on the same purpose, had their resources already mortgaged.

"I'll tax mother's friends out in Omaha," she announced calmly. "I shall send a personal letter to each, telling exactly the amount I wish, and if that letter is ignored I shall follow it with another and stronger one. They are able to give, and they must give."

"She's showing what I call a good insurgent spirit," Landon told Winifred the day M. Gussie's intentions became known on the Hill. "And, I say, Winifred, that girl has more go in her than half the fellows here! I prophesy that when we're grubbing along trying to make good out in the world, she'll be cutting a swath through life wider than a dozen of the best of us."

Intense action was one of the requirements of M. Gussie's nature.

"I have to be doing things everlastingly," she said ruefully as she joined Winifred that same morning on their way to trigonometry, "or else my tongue runs away with me." There was a wistful look in her eyes which no one except Winifred ever saw, and a hesitancy in her manner. "I guess I'm doing this year exactly as I did last when—when you didn't want me to." But the

A JUNIOR CO-ED

fact that she spoke in a voice so low that it reached Winifred's ears only showed that Gussie was not doing exactly "the same."

Winifred merely squeezed the hand held suggestively near her.

"But you know," M. Gussie defended herself, "I see so many things that need to be changed; and the only way to bring about a change is to agitate—history proves that. Reforms come only by way of agitation, you know."

"Yes, I know it, Gussie," confessed Winifred, adding, "I believe I'll never try to shut you up again, you do such good work—such effective work by agitation—only—only ——"

Gussie looked at her wistfully again. "Yes, I know now what you mean. I didn't know last year at this time. You think that if I must agitate—and I don't seem able to help myself—the agitation ought to be ——"

"Ladylike," supplied Winifred swiftly. "It's more effective coming from a womanly girl with subdued manners."

M. Gussie sighed, but accepted the interpolation meekly. "Subdued manners," she realized, were not her birthright, but must be hers by acquisition.

"I believe," she exclaimed at the class room door, "that I'm more fitted for the pursuits of war

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

than of peace!" and the two girls entered the room laughing, M. Gussie's handsome face so bright that more than one student followed her with his gaze, his face relaxing sympathetically.

The atmosphere of Huntingdon was aiding in Gussie's recovery, but her energy and her broad sympathies, acting on a spirit too youthful for perfect balance, were prone to cause her to "break out in a new spot" at any time. It was this proclivity which was interfering with a plan dear to Winifred's heart—and endorsed also by Helen Joyce Forest. This plan looked toward inviting M. Gussie to become a member of Alpha Gamma in place of Shirley Dean, who had left college in her freshman year, thereby reducing the number in the Alpha Gamma junior delegation to six. Seven was the number allowed each class by the rules of the sorority. Winifred felt sure that her plan would be forwarded by the Westerner's election to the important position of literary editor of the Weekly. But despite the faithful and really brilliant work she did on that periodical, Alpha Gamma hesitated.

Adelaide Prell summed up the girls' attitude toward M. Gussie when she said, "I like her awfully well, and she is as bright as a pile of new dollars! She'd make a loyal and useful sorority member, but I'm afraid she'd mortify us to death sooner or

A JUNIOR CO-ED

later. Suppose, for instance, it had been in our chapter house, at one of our receptions, that she had told Professor Hershall that all advanced teachers in the country were declaring for Socialism!—and there he is so steeped in Republicanism that he acts as though the Keeper of the Golden Gate himself founded the party!”

The unfortunate speech recorded on Adelaide’s memory had been made in the hearing of several students at the reception given the freshman class shortly after college opened when M. Gussie was fresh from Omaha.

But Winifred did not lose hope of receiving her eventually into Alpha Gamma. “Perhaps now,” she told Rebecca, “when she is attracting the favorable attention of the faculty—and even of Mr. Perry—in this matter of scholarships, the girls will change their minds.”

It was at the last sorority meeting in October that the Alpha Gamma scholarship plans were brought to a focus. Several carriages deposited the “old girls” at the chapter house door, and these same devoted alumnae in Alpha Gamma did a great deal of talking to the active members on sacrifice and loyalty to the college and the sorority. They told of the sacrifices which had marked their own college days when Alpha Gamma was young, and the chapter house was new and the furnishings

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

scanty, and when the college was poorer than it was to-day.

Finally, Lillian, who had been swallowing and sniffing sympathetically for several moments, leaned over and whispered to Belle Eaton in a choked voice audible across the room, "My sleeve's so tight that my handkerchief has stuck where I can't reach it—lend me yours, won't you?"

And the speaker wondered why several of her hearers laughed in the midst of the story of early privation which she was relating.

After the close of the meeting, when the alumnae had departed, a dozen girls gravitated toward Winifred's room to discuss the situation and act on the plan suggested by their visitors. A dozen occupants strained the seating capacity of the stew-ardess' room to its utmost, even the floor room, and just as they had got nicely packed in, with Lillian at the side furthest from the door, Janet appeared bearing the card tray.

"For Lillian, of course," guessed Erma. "Is it her 'gentleman friend' on the faculty, or just one of the plain every day students?"

The corners of Janet's mouth turned up in spite of her efforts to keep them severe, as without replying she passed the card over to Lillian. That is, she dutifully started it, but the first girl into whose hands it fell held it up and read, "Mr.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Joseph Amherst Pierce," and handed it coolly to Erma Cunningham to use in recording subscriptions.

"Girls, how does my hair look?" asked Lillian, beginning to step over the sitters who barred her way on the floor.

"As though you had combed it well yesterday morning, and slept ever since," replied her chum heartlessly.

Lillian's hand went to her head in distress, and Winifred hastened to add an unintentional bit of Job's comfort by saying indignantly, "It looks as well as usual!"

Then in the midst of the laugh which followed, she arose so hastily that two freshmen who were occupying the arms of her chair were nearly knocked off, and hastened after Lillian. "I'll be back in a moment, girls," she called over her shoulder as she ran down the hall.

Lillian, her mouth full of hairpins, looked at herself seriously in the glass while Winifred told her something that she had been keeping to herself and thinking over for many days. "I believe we'd better tell the girls first, and enlist their sympathy, and then I am sure the alumnae will not object."

And Lillian, who had never before been obliged to call on any one for sympathy in any important

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

matter, gazed at Winifred with a forlorn expression which endured at least two minutes while she assented. "Tell 'em anything you think best, Winifred. I'm glad I'll not be there to hear. You're a darling and so wise and smart and —— Does my hair look nice, dear? I'm going to put on these two puffs—they are my own hair, so I needn't call them false, need I? I tell you, Winifred Lowe, I shall work like a Trojan to help raise that money. You may tell the girls that. Tell 'em I shall beg from every one I know, and a few whom I don't. Is my dress fastened behind? There! I think I've kept Joseph Amherst waiting long enough to remind him that he has not called before this term."

Then, her face wreathed in smiles, she sauntered down the stairs slowly so that Joseph Amherst should not be deluded for a moment into thinking that she was glad to see him or had missed his calls. Already she had become so accustomed to her poverty-stricken state that it did not seem to "dent her serenity," as Rebecca Bicknell put it. For the girls, although ignorant of the late history of the ring, had been informed of Mr. Antwerp's fall among financial thieves.

"It's lots healthier to walk down-town than to ride," Lillian now declared, and not content with enjoying the health benefits herself, she imposed

A JUNIOR CO-ED

them on the unwilling Flossie. "Walking takes off flesh," she informed that distressed young lady after a two-mile tramp that morning.

"It probably would," wailed Flossie, "if it didn't give me such an outrageous appetite. I just wish, Lillian, that your father would get his money back again, so you could forget it's healthy to walk!"

But her father had not his money back again, and Winifred returned to her crowded room prepared to propose the plan to which she had just won Lillian's consent. At the door she met Mrs. Betts, followed by Pete, and in Mrs. Betts' hands was a large platter of fudge.

"I made it to-day be-tween times," she gasped smilingly. "I know well enough that it ain't fit to eat. Shouldn't won-der if you'd want to throw it all away. I never was no hand to make candy. Scat, Pete! What-ever are you doing up here, I want to know!"

When Winifred held up the platter before the open door, a chorus of thanks followed Sarah Mary Betts down the back stairs. And from the foot her characteristic reply was wafted back :

"See whether it's fit to eat be-fore you take on so about it. I never could make good candy."

The platter having been passed and Mrs. Betts' deprecatory remarks proved as false as usual, Erma

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

Cunningham in an absent-minded manner set the platter on the floor beside her and, producing a pencil, rapped on the round of Winifred's chair.

"Girls," she began, "I have decided on my sacrifice. I can give the fifteen dollars that papa always gives me to buy Christmas presents."

Adelaide Prell sitting on the edge of the bed couch suddenly threw herself back with muffled shrieks of laughter. "Erma's sacrifice!" she gasped when Rebecca had struck her smartly between the shoulders to prevent strangulation, "Erma's sacrifice! I should call it the sacrifice of the ones who expect the presents!"

The others, whose earnestness had blinded them to the point discovered by Adelaide, joined in her mirth, but Erma, undisturbed, even as to her expression, ate on until the uproar had subsided. Then she remarked casually, "I omitted to mention that the money is always given me to make myself presents!" and the laugh turned on Adelaide.

Here Rebecca raised her voice above the hubbub. "Begin this self-denial business, please, by denying yourselves the luxury of so much talk. Keep to the point before the house. M. Gussie says that the majority of women are in the stone age yet; that is, the stone age of business methods."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Humph," exclaimed Clara. "I should say we are in the gold age. If we can't conduct ourselves in a businesslike way we can sell the clothes off our backs to send some poor student to school. That's my case at least. Of course, my party dress never got so far as my back, but my metaphor holds good just the same."

"Metaphor," scornfully from Punch. "I've met-her-before as a hyperbole, if I understand figures of speech."

Erma pounded on the chair round. "See here! I want more figures now than speeches. We've got to report this to the alumnæ to-morrow, and I want to know what to report."

"I can give ——" Winifred was beginning, when an arm encircled her neck and a hand came over her mouth.

"You shall pledge nothing," declared Flossie.

"No," said Erma decidedly, "I shall not put your name on this paper. You're putting one student through college now," significantly, "and that's all you shall be allowed to do."

"Keep your hand over her mouth, Punch, or she'll contribute in spite of us," directed Rebecca, and, for some time, Winifred was smothered into silence.

The alumnæ had suggested that each girl first make some sacrifice in order to set the ball roll-

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

ing, then that each ask for contributions from every one on whom she felt she could call. But when the record of the sacrifices was down in black and white the resultant sum was pitifully small when compared with the total which must be raised if Alpha Gamma hoped to sustain her place as leader on the Hill.

"It seems to me the alumnæ will be obliged to raise most of it," said Belle Eaton with a wise nod.

"The poor alumnæ!" commiserated Adelaide. "It's my opinion they have nothing left to give. It's something all the time for the college or the house."

"If only Mr. Lester Dansbury were not in Europe on his wedding tour," sighed Rebecca Bicknell. "A few scratches of his pen would vastly relieve us."

"He signs his name so easily," added Belle regretfully.

"And if only Mrs. Forest were not on her way to Italy—and had not given so much that I should be ashamed to ask her for any more!" exclaimed Adelaide.

"And if Lillian's father had not lost his money——" Clara was beginning, when Winifred interrupted her. It was time for Winifred to give such portions of the history of Lillian's beautiful

A JUNIOR CO-ED

investment ring as should enable the girls to understand the request she intended to make. In the midst of constant interruptions she told the story, omitting those details which would enable any one to trace the deed back to Sayles Cooper.

"There was a poor student," she said, "never mind whom, a student who would have been obliged to leave college had she not offered her ring—without the student's knowing it—to the registrar to be redeemed by the payment of the tuition. She expected to be able to redeem the ring in a few months out of her monthly allowance, but this failure has overtaken her father, and now she has no way of paying the tuition. Her father doesn't know it's not in her possession, and you know the chancellor has started on his Western tour, so I can't explain matters to him. But when the money for our scholarship is raised why not ——"

"Oh, yes," interrupted Belle Eaton, seizing the idea in advance of Winifred's words. "We can use it to redeem the ring—only it will take all the year, of course, to raise the money! Lillian was a dear to help some poor girl."

Winifred discreetly ignored the sex of the recipient of Lillian's bounty, but nodded assent to Belle's statement. "I don't know yet just how it can all be arranged, but we can work hard to raise

THE ALPHA GAMMA SCHOLARSHIP

the money, and when it is raised there will be a way to connect it with the ring, I know."

"This will give us an incentive to work," chimed in Rebecca Bicknell, "but first I shall shake Lillian for not telling me about the ring!"

Back and forth flew the comments, with scraps of plans and promises, until the maid once more appeared with the strange announcement, usual, however, with Janet:

"Miss Lowe, there's some one to see you at the 'phone."

Winifred went down to the library, and taking up the receiver called, "Hello!"

She was surprised when Mrs. Sweet's voice answered her, as Mrs. Sweet had a fixed aversion to talking into a "hole in the wall."

"Can you come out here to-night and see me?" she demanded.

Winifred hesitated. "Why—no—Mrs. Sweet, unless it's absolutely necessary. What ——"

Mrs. Sweet broke in irately: "I can't stand it another week with that Sayles Cooper a-doin' the way he does, and I want that you should see about it—do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear." Winifred's voice indicated boundless amazement. "But I don't understand—and what have I to do with Sayles Cooper—and what has he been doing that's so dreadful?"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Instead of replying at once Mrs. Sweet cleared her throat, thumped on the transmitter and did some indistinct muttering. Then she asked:

"How soon can you come over?"

"Not until day after to-morrow."

"Humph!" came from the other end of the line. "Well, if you can't, I suppose ——" and Winifred was cut off from further communication.

"It's queer," she thought going back up-stairs slowly; "I have never mentioned Sayles Cooper's name to her—and what has he done to bring down her wrath on his head? Louise said she liked him. I do hope," anxiously, "that Lillian has not put the ring in pawn to benefit some one not worth it."

She told the owner of the ring the purport of the message that evening while she was getting into her kimono preparatory to studying.

"I know," replied Lillian with an air of quiet certainty foreign to her, "that Army Blue is all right, no matter what Mrs. Sweet says. He probably has forgotten to wipe his shoes, or he has let the water overflow the bathroom floor, or has fallen down-stairs in the middle of the night and scared her stiff ——"

"I can't conjure up the picture of Mrs. Sweet scared," smiled Winifred. "But I am inclined to agree with you that he is true blue—and I hope she can't change my mind."

CHAPTER V

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

THE following afternoon Winifred, hanging her solitude sign on the outside of her door, seated herself in front of the desk and began work on her junior thesis. Spread out before her were her note-books filled with wisdom gleaned from her library reading. Scattered about on the floor, her lap and the arms of her chair, were piled books and bound volumes of magazines, all containing articles bearing on her theme, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Rebellion."

So interested did she become that she forgot Army Blue and Mrs. Sweet until a familiar voice at the keyhole startled her.

"No entrance here,"

rhymed the voice,

"it doth appear.
A learned seer perhaps is near.
Must I depart,
Oh, dear of heart!"

"No, you needn't!" called Winifred struggling

A JUNIOR CO-ED

to extricate herself from the evidences of seerdom.
"I'll let you in in just a minute."

"Don't hurry," returned Louise politely. "I have plenty to amuse me out here—two kinds of pills, smelling salts and some cough drops." She was caught in the act of consuming one of the latter when the door opened.

"Louise Wallace, you have a cold!" accused Winifred.

"Oh, no!" Louise airily waved her hand as she sauntered in and perched herself on the arm of the big chair. "I am merely for a brief season reversing the laws of nature by breathing through my mouth and talking through my nose!"

"Where did you catch it?"

"Which—my nose or my mouth?" innocently. "I believe that other people are supposed to be in the habit of 'catching it' from my mouth. At least Cousin Anne tells me so. There's nothing cheering about myself that I don't hear from my relatives sooner or later."

"Poor Louise!" commiserated Winifred, "and here you are about to add still other relatives unto your present numerous supply."

Louise visibly brightened, and throwing off her coat settled down comfortably into the chair and applied the smelling salts to her nose. "Winifred," confidentially, "one reason why I am

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

marrying Ashley is that he has so few blood connections. He professes to regret it, but I tell him not to worry—mine will make up all deficiencies ! ”

“ You know,” protested Winifred, “ that you would marry Mr. Grey if his relatives were as thick as—as the trees in the forest.”

“ Surely,” assented Louise glibly ; “ especially if they were as stationary as trees, so I could run away from them ! Cousin Anne says I’m not marrying in the right spirit. She says that in her day girls did not discuss the men they married—until after they married ’em. I added that last phrase myself in order to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.”

The mention of Mrs. Sweet’s name recalled her telephone message, and Winifred abruptly changed the subject. “ Please tell me, Louise, what Sayles Cooper has been doing to offend your cousin ? ”

“ It’s what he has not been doing. It is a sin of omission this time, instead of commission.”

Winifred left her chair and sat down on a low stool in front of her caller. “ Omission of what ? ”

“ Food ! ”

“ ‘ Food,’ ” repeated Winifred. “ What do you mean ? Hasn’t he enough to eat ? ”

Louise shook her head. “ My worthy cousin has investigated. She doesn’t own it, but I know. She has investigated through the keyhole and a

A JUNIOR CO-ED

crack in the door and in his larder itself—your old dry goods boxes which have endured as cupboards for that room even unto this day. Of course she investigated the boxes when Cooper was absent. But the thing which exasperates her," Louise dropped her bantering tone, "is the fact that he won't let her feed him. I expect that the emptier his stomach gets the prouder he becomes, until by the time its walls are ready to whack together he won't even look at a cold bite if any one throws it at him."

Winifred rested her troubled face on her palms. Her thoughts flew back to her own efforts at light housekeeping. It was not easy work for her whom nature had patterned for a housekeeper—how then could a young man —

She looked up suddenly. "Just what has Mrs. Sweet in mind? Why should she have telephoned to me?"

Louise pursed out her lips. "My dear, Cousin Anne sent me here to-day with instructions just what to say to you. It amounts to the same as the government instructing its ambassadors. But you know that often said ambassadors exceed their instructions—I came intending to exceed mine."

"How awfully mysterious you are," cried Winifred in a tone of lively curiosity.

"It's meet that I should be," explained Louise

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

gravely, "for a conspiracy has been made against you."

"And who are the conspirators?"

"My Cousin Anne and your own Sairy Mary Betts. Therefore, I shall proceed to reveal the conspiracy in full that you may be prepared when Sairy Mary broaches the subject. But don't you let on," with a sudden descent to slanginess, "that I gave away the inner workings of the plan ——"

"Do stop talking, and tell me what it is," interrupted Winifred.

Louise stared at her severely and took another cough drop. "You are asking the impossible. But, never mind, I shall go on by going back. It seems that the only thing about the chapter house that 'Sairy' doesn't adore is your coal and ashes boy ——"

"Oh, yes!" interrupted Winifred. "His duties began two weeks ago."

"Exactly so, and according to your cook he is a bloated aristocrat in the coal and ashes line. It seems that she was on the eve of complaining of him when her eye rested on Sayles Cooper, and he appeared goodly in her sight."

"But she has not mentioned to me ——"

Louise waved her hand for silence. "It doth appear that the present lord of your heating plant is so surfeited with work in other places that he

A JUNIOR CO-ED

can't do justice to all. He jumps down your cellar stairs, scatters coal and ashes all over your cellar bottom without 'redding up,' does not sufficiently replenish the fuel in your furnace, and tracks ashes up the stairs and street dirt down. Mrs. Betts was about to give notice when ——"

"Oh, Louise!" Winifred's tone overran with dismay. "So soon?"

"My dear," Louise leaned forward soothingly, "she intended to give notice for the coal and ashes boy, not herself!"

"Oh! All right!"

"But the situation is to be saved," Louise continued, "and Sayles Cooper saved, also, by installing him in your cellar. Cousin Anne vouches for him—that he will be grateful, polite to Sairy Mary Betts, and will perform with promptness, despatch and cleanliness the duties pertaining to his high office."

Winifred clapped her hands. "Mrs. Betts shall have him—if he will come."

"He'll come fast enough. He goes out work-hunting every day, but you see he came so late that the jobs have been snapped up. But"—raising her voice as she saw Winifred was about to interrupt—"that's not all the features of the conspiracy which those two have entered into against you."

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

"Let me hear them all," urged Winifred.

"Well, now I'll go back and bring up the arrears in my tale again. Mrs. Betts tells my worthy relative that enough is wasted in this house to feed two—no, don't ruffle your plumage like that. The waste is unavoidable. For instance, you have a pudding for dinner. There is some of it left over—but not enough to go on the table the next day. See? And it's the same with other things. Now, as 'Sairy' and Anne have arranged it, you will be requested to help the shrinking lad out—remember I am speaking in terms of physique when I say 'shrinking'—by fixing his stipend at food instead of pence."

Winifred wrinkled her forehead. A dubious expression on her face caused Louise to laugh.

"You don't know yet what you have in the person of Sarah Mary Betts, she that was a Davis. Sarah Mary is a planner—a twister—a contriver. She says to Cousin Anne, says she, 'If that little Miss Lowe will let me do it I can provide for the boy at the kitchen table, and it shan't cost that house half what it would to pay him in solid cash ——' "

"That sounds hopeful," murmured Winifred.

"Sairy Mary says, says she," Louise went on, "I'll save the odds and ends and contrive for that lad dishes that shall keep the breath of life

A JUNIOR CO-ED

in 'im and the flesh on his bones. I can have his breakfast ready for 'im when he comes to empty the ashes, his dinner when he comes to fill the heater at midday, and his supper when he comes to red up and fill up at night, always,' adds Sairy Mary, 'if I'm allowed to.' And, Winifred, she is as good as her word."

"But, Louise, ought I to let her take on herself the extra work ——"

"Law suz, child," wheezed the other in an excellent imitation of Mrs. Betts, "she'll be delighted to sit by and see him fill up. I never met any one with such a mania for filling people up. I believe she lives to cook."

Because of Louise's full revelation of the conspiracy, Mrs. Betts found in Winifred a very attentive and docile listener that evening when she complained of the present coal and ashes boy, who was also a student. With many short and labored breaths she set a lamp on her scrubbed floor and pointed triumphantly to the shoe shapes preserved in ashes between the cellar and the outside doors. Then she opened the cellar door to reveal the dirt mixed with ashes littering the stairs.

"Those stairs I've not touched to-day just on pur-pose to show you," she explained. "They was well washed yesterday, though, and in order to

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

keep 'em re-spectable I could wash 'em three times a day. Would you stand that?"

"No, I wouldn't," replied Winifred soberly. "Why don't you scold him?"

Mrs. Betts threw up her hands and sank into her rocker, leaving the lamp on the floor to cast an accusing light on the ashes. Pulling up the front of her skirt she crossed her feet on the low stool which always stood against the wall and laughed. While she was still a Davis, Sarah Mary had been possessed of dimples and was considered the prettiest girl in Green Valley. The dimples had disappeared, swallowed up in flesh. But a certain engaging comeliness of face and manner remained. When she smiled, which was frequently, the girls, who had fallen into the habit of invading the kitchen during their leisure moments, failed to notice the angle which her knob of hair described with her nose. When she talked, her pleasant good-natured voice caused her listeners to forget her loss of waist line, while her appreciation of humor was not the least among the lodestones of her disposition.

Therefore she laughed at Winifred's question.

"Scold!" she ejaculated. "Law suz, child, you don't know what you're talk-ing about. Might as well talk about scolding a streak of greased light-ning. Three times a day that door,"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

she pointed to the outer one, "busts open with a snap that makes me lose my breath, and that boy is a-jumpin' down the cel-lar stairs a-scattering dirt all the way. Then there comes the awfullest rattle-te-banging you ever heard and the cel-lar doors busts open again and that streak comes up a'most hid in the worst cloud of ashes you ever see—the whole cel-lar is filled with that same cloud—and he's gone be-fore I can up and say Jack Robin-son! Then I go down and finish up his work, for I don't want no fro-zen girls on my hands. Any-way, what's needed ain't scold-ings, but a new boy."

With this diplomatic twist, Mrs. Betts unfolded the other part of her plan and received Winifred's ready assent.

Shortly after this talk Mrs. Anne Sweet was reconciled to being called to the obnoxious "hole in the wall" by hearing Winifred's voice. And Winifred asked her if she would kindly invite Sayles Cooper to stop at the chapter house in the morning and interview Mrs. Betts.

"I guess for once," thought Mrs. Sweet, climbing the stairs to the room of Army Blue, "that Louisy done as she was told."

When Winifred, who had outlined to the girls the course of events which were transpiring in regard to the lord of the cellar, was getting ready for

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

bed that night, Lillian came in merely to tell her that she was a dear, and that it was not so bad to be poor after all! Lillian was attired in a beautiful silk kimono, and was finishing a box of expensive chocolates which she had purchased that day to celebrate the arrival of another fifteen dollar allowance.

As the purchaser heaped the candy in a bonbon dish on the desk, Winifred, combing her long hair, wondered how it would seem to be in the state of poverty which admitted the possession of such a monthly sum for pin money. Out of it she could during the year have made both financial ends meet as well as to redeem the ring. But she well knew Lillian could not.

"Isn't it queer," her caller mused, "how we seem fated to get all mixed up with Army Blue? I hope he doesn't go up and down the cellar stairs like a streak and pay no attention to Mrs. Betts. Isn't she a dear? I wrote home that I loved to talk with her and mother wrote back that she had suspected for some time that I was getting very strange ideas, and now she knew! She doesn't understand the situation here, you see, at all. Mrs. Betts is such a far cry from our old mammy cook at home. Isn't she lovely, Winifred, to cook separate meals for him and fuss over him?"

Very thankfully Sayles Cooper consented to be

A JUNIOR CO-ED

fussed over. He wondered a little at the strange ways of this chapter house, for no other, as he found, boarded its chore boy. But Mrs. Betts had put the proposition to him in a businesslike way as coming from the stewardess, and the boy did not quarrel with his pleasant fate. As the oldest sorority on the Hill, Alpha Gamma had the right to lead in any innovation it pleased, even to paying for its cellar work in meals—especially such palatable meals as were served by Mrs. Betts.

One day, shortly after his installation, Winifred and Rebecca were walking up to college, followed by Beau Brown and Landon Stearns. In front of the Hall of Languages they met Army Blue.

There was no shrinking in the boy's manner, nor covert expression in his glance to indicate that he thought the position he held in the chapter house marked any difference socially between the residents thereof and himself. He had been introduced to both girls in the cellar, which they were inspecting and where he was shoveling ashes. That the introduction had occurred in front of a coal bin and not in the parlor apparently did not concern him. He looked to them confidently for recognition and he was not disappointed.

"I wonder," said Rebecca casually over her shoulder to the boys, "why he has come out such

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

a day as this without his overcoat." She spoke with her muff against her cold ear.

"Probably he hasn't had time to take it out of its moth-balls yet," returned the Beau in gentle sarcasm. Since associating with M. Gussie, the Beau had affected to find the majority of the girls on the Hill slightly frivolous.

Landon drew his cap further over his forehead the better to meet the cutting north wind which swept over the Hill with a promise of immediate winter. "I know there are such things as students starving and freezing for the sake of an education, but I've never met it here unless ——" he jerked his head backward to indicate the blue-clad figure turning in at the Alpha Gamma Chapter House.

Rebecca looked appealingly at Winifred. "He's just joking us, too, isn't he?"

"Of course he is," the Beau assured her before Winifred could reply. "I don't doubt Cooper has discarded overcoats because he is a dress reformer or a sun worshiper and it's a part of his religion not to put too much vile woolen and cotton between himself and the healing, uplifting rays of the sun."

"In that case," Landon rejoined, "a good old Huntingdon wind like this would blow any queer-ness in the way of principles out of him and blow him into an overcoat—if he has one," and both

A JUNIOR CO-ED

boys, raising their hats, rounded the corner of the Hall of Languages and went on to the gymnasium.

A few moments later, Rebecca interrupted her note-taking to write in her tablet, "Isn't the Beau getting perfectly obnoxious—and did they really mean that Sayles Cooper has no overcoat?"

It was a question which Winifred lay in wait in the hall that afternoon to propound to Landon.

"Of course I don't know," Landon told her, "but I've begun to suspect that he hasn't."

"I should think," began Winifred indignantly, "that some of you men had old ones."

"The trouble with that chap is," interrupted Landon, "you don't give him things easily. I—that is—we football fellows tried it a little—in a way—with him several days ago. He won't accept favors nor run in debt—nor play ball—so what are you going to do?"

"Think of a way out," returned Winifred promptly.

Landon regarded her ruefully. "I wish I had your ingenuity."

"Well, I don't!" still more promptly. "I need every dram of it myself. People who have means don't need so much ——"

"Brains—thanks awfully," supplemented Landon. "You're always throwing my dad's money at my head—which is more than he does!" and

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

the two walked down the hall laughing, Army Blue not being referred to again.

That night after dinner the Alpha Gamma juniors were, to a girl, smitten with a desire for pop-corn, and Winifred was sent as a delegate to the kitchen to "see how the land lay."

"It's all right, girls," she reported, "provided we wait until he—which pronoun stands for Army Blue—has eaten his dinner and departed. Until then no horde may invade Mrs. Betts' domain."

His dinner looked very appetizing as it lay on the kitchen table. There was a white cloth which Sarah Mary had brought from home, and in the middle of the table was her own "Rochester burner," which gave, according to its owner, the best artificial light shed abroad in two counties. The dishes were not of the thick kitchen variety, but were culled from the dining-room cupboards. "He'll eat like a Christian, so long as I provide for 'im," quoth Mrs. Betts to Janet.

And if the table looked like the table of a Christian, the food tasted even more Christian-like.

Army Blue, being keen of eye, saw the neatness and brightness before him, and being keen of appetite did such ample justice to the food, disguised leftovers from the day before, that Mrs. Betts thought it was worth while doing for "such as him."

When he arose from the table and turned

A JUNIOR CO-ED

toward the door he lingered a moment arranging his books in the crook of his arm and turning up his coat collar. Then with his hand on the door-knob and a strangely affectionate expression on his square face he asked respectfully, "Mrs. Betts, have you any boys of your own?"

"Law, no!" she returned brusquely. "What 'ud I want with a boy a-track-ing in the dirt?" but she turned abruptly, nevertheless, and went into the dining-room, stopping there a moment doing nothing before announcing to the juniors in the library that the coast was clear. For Mrs. Betts had wanted boys—and girls—a houseful to cook for and work for and spoil and love. It was the emptiness of the house in Green Valley which had driven her away with Pete and Druisy. Pete and Druisy went as far as a cat and a bird could go toward filling her heart but her heart was so large that there were not cats nor birds enough in the world to occupy it exclusively.

Her eyes were a trifle moist as she announced to the juniors that the coast was clear.

"Mercy!" responded Belle Eaton. "It ought to be clear by this time, also every dish in the house! How that boy must eat!"

A moment later the popper was flying back and forth over the red-hot stove while Lillian shelled corn beside the table. She had volunteered to

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

perform this disagreeable service, saying that the poverty stricken must learn to work.

Whereupon Rebecca giggled heartlessly and pointed to Lillian's slim and tapering fingers. "Enlarge 'em," suggested Rebecca, "by dusting and sweeping our room, and don't leave it for me to do. Remember it's your turn to-morrow."

Lillian frowned. "I believe, Reb Bicknell, you'd be glad to see my fingers so big that I couldn't wear my ring—if I ever get it back again!"

"Cheer up," advised Winifred from the broad window sill beneath Druisy's cage. "I met Mrs. Willow this morning, and she said a friend of hers had sent her twenty-five dollars. That makes—let's see."

"You don't have to see—I know." Clara Pike arose on her tiptoes and rattled off the sum in one breath. "Three hundred and twenty-five dollars and seventy-five cents."

"We're getting along so slowly," complained Erma, who sat on the floor stroking Pete. "I've begged of every one that I know is worth two cents or over, and I've collected exactly five dollars. The last man I asked to contribute said the college had squeezed him already until he felt like a dry sponge, and another man said I evidently didn't realize that the winter promised to be one of unusual financial depression."

Lillian rolled her eyes upward and amended

A JUNIOR CO-ED

hollowly: "The promise is already fulfilled in my case!" She managed to get a deal of amusement out of her "poverty-stricken" state, albeit, under the fun, lay the first real anxiety she had ever known.

"The Psi U's are going to give an historical ball in January, I heard to-day," from Winifred. "Old costumes, you know, with tickets a dollar each. Proceeds to go toward their scholarship."

"Three hundred and twenty-five dollars and seventy-five cents," repeated Belle. "How much does that leave to be raised?"

Clara again arose promptly on her toes. "Sixteen hundred seventy-four dollars and twenty-five cents—I want some more pop-corn."

"Wait until it's your turn, piggie-wiggie," retorted Belle Eaton, who was wielding the popper. "I haven't had a mouthful yet myself."

Mrs. Betts, in her comfortable rocker, was shaking like a glass of her own jelly. Mrs. Betts had fallen in love with the girl of nowadays as she was found at the Alpha Gamma Chapter House, gay, democratic, and sympathetic.

"Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!" came a chorus of wails from the top of the stairs. "We want some pop-corn n-o-w."

"Quick," whispered Winifred. "It's Flossie. Lock the door."

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

There was a general scramble both in the kitchen and on the stairs which resulted in the turning of three keys, barring the way into the kitchen from back stairs, dining-room and out-of-doors.

"There's more than one piggie-wiggie in there," came the declaration from the dining-room door in Punch's voice. "And I know of several juniors who won't sleep well to-night, so there!"

"What will they do?" asked Mrs. Betts.

"Oh, fix up our beds in some outlandish way," replied Belle cheerfully. "Here, you Rebel," to Rebecca, "take this popper and see how it goes to fry your face. I'm going to eat corn."

She sat down on the footstool at Mrs. Betts' feet and placed her panful of corn in the lap which presented, however, so steep a slope that the pan would have catapulted to the floor had Belle not held it. "Now, eat!" she commanded.

"Law, child, I haven't eaten pop-corn since I got my teeth."

Belle looked up in unfeigned amazement. "Mrs. Betts, do you mean to tell me that you ate pop-corn before you had any teeth?"

Whereupon Sarah Mary shook so violently that the pop-corn rattled over the edge of the pan and was scattered on the floor while her knob of hair rioted back and forth across the top of her head.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Law sakes, child, I mean false teeth, and not teeth like your little white ones."

Just as the girls, having "red up" the muss they had made, were departing, a belated cry of, "News here, News fer two cents," traveled along the walk and sent Winifred to unlock the door. Winifred had lingered in obedience to sundry signs from Mrs. Betts.

Newsy entered bringing with him his usual assurance without his usual cheerfulness. He walked in and, uninvited, climbed on Mrs. Betts' "baking stool" whose height barely allowed her feet to touch the floor, much less Newsy's. If the boy's manner betokened less opulence than usual, his dress indicated more.

"Why, Newsy," exclaimed Winifred, "have you had a fortune befall you?"

"Nope!" rejoined Newsy, drawing the back of a grimy hand across his nose.

Since his mother's death, he had lived with an aunt who exacted half of his earnings and turned him in with her brood of six. He had, however, in the place of Mr. Lester Dansbury, absentee, constituted Landon Stearns as his guardian. Since the latter had decked him out in such an abundance of crêpe, he had attached himself to the young man, calling at the Psi Upsilon Chapter House almost daily, invading Landon's room, and

A SUCCESSFUL CONSPIRACY

doing small services therein uninvited but not unthanked. The inhabitant of the room he admired in all things and emulated in some. The "some," however, did not extend to perpetual cleanliness. When he made his trip to the Hill late in the day his face and hands bore the evidence of remote ablutions only. But when Landon remonstrated with him he exclaimed with conviction :

"Once a day's enough to wash. When I gits ready fer school mornin's I scrubs good'n plenty and then I quits. I have to earn me livin'," with an important emphasis on the "I."

Mrs. Betts, having purchased a paper, disappeared into the pantry. Newsy's eyes lit up as he watched this manœuvre, which was evidently not a new one. And when she reappeared bearing a generous piece of pumpkin pie his spirits temporarily arose.

"I bought these duds," he boasted. "They is the first I ever had that didn't come off some other guy."

The duds consisted of a new overcoat, trousers and under coat with a new cap of such generous proportions that it nearly set on the tops of the child's outstanding ears. Thick gloves completed his costume.

"Are they paid for?" questioned Mrs. Betts.

Newsy's eyes fell, and he slid off the chair. "I

A JUNIOR CO-ED

must be goin'," he said, and, without answering the question, departed rapidly.

"Now, what's that boy been up to?" demanded Mrs. Betts in a concerned voice. "I never seen him act like that."

"Nor I," assented Winifred. "I'll ask Landon to-morrow." Then she glanced up anxiously at the clock, adding, "What was it, Mrs. Betts, that you wanted to see me about?"

Sarah Mary, her day's work done, unpinned the front of her skirt and carefully smoothed out the wrinkles as she sat down in her rocker, her feet elevated to the stool. She was smiling so broadly that the spots where dimples had once asserted themselves sank below the surrounding surfaces.

"It come to me in mind," she began, leaning back and folding her hands, "when you girls was a-talkin' about raising money for that scholarship. May-be it wouldn't do a bit of good to try, and then ag-ain, mebby it would. And if you girls can't do any-thing with him, it's pos-sible I could throw in a little word that would help. Of course, it may-be I don't know Mose Carter, and then ag-ain mebby I do!"

With this comprehensive preamble Sarah Mary Betts proceeded to reveal what had come to her "in mind."

CHAPTER VI

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

"WHEN I get hold of a piece of news it fairly smokes out of my pores till I can find a chance to tell it," Belle Eaton exclaimed one day, "but Winifred Lowe can go about all day complacently with a whole charge of dynamite curled up snugly under her tongue!"

Whether the idea put forth by Sarah Mary Betts would eventually prove dynamite or smoke Winifred had no way of knowing. "But to me it looks more like smoke," she told herself dubiously. This was one reason she was in no hurry to tell it. Another was that all the day following its unfolding she was unusually busy.

Not until ten in the evening, therefore, did she open her door, take in the solitude sign, and go forth intent on gathering together a suitable audience. The hall was but dimly lighted, the gas jet at the head of the stairs having been turned low.

Further down the hall, however, a door was open, emitting not only light but strange sights and

A JUNIOR CO-ED

sounds. These sights and sounds came from the room occupied by Punch and Flossie, and in the doorway hung the latter young lady, kimono clad, and with waving slippered feet.

"Are you committing suicide?" demanded Winifred.

All the reply Flossie made was to fall to the floor, pant a moment, push a stool forward, mount it, grasp the lintel of the door, kick the stool from under, and to the accompaniment of "One, two, three," droned out by her roommate, dangle as long as her plump round arms could stand the strain. Then she dropped panting on her feet and continued her downward motion until she sat in a heap on the rug, her face red from her strenuous exertions.

"Winifred Lowe," she gasped, "be thankful every day of your life that you're right down lean, and don't have to do such barbarous things to yourself in order to wear one dress six months."

"As it is," retorted Winifred, "I wear one something less than six years. Where are all the girls? I have something to tell."

Three doors flew open simultaneously. "Have you any news that won't keep?" asked Rebecca Bicknell's sleepy voice from the bed where she lay reading history. It was Lillian who opened the door, and Lillian who added, "I ought to study

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

some—but come right in here, because this room is the biggest. What have you heard?”

Adelaide Prell appeared hugging a dictionary in one arm and a novel in the other. Crossing the hall in two long strides she fell into the easiest chair the room afforded, saying coolly, “I came early to get a front seat.”

Following Punch limped Flossie and, with many groans over the soreness of her muscles, lay down gingerly beside Rebecca. “I don’t know which is the most killing,” she sighed, “to diet or to exercise. I guess I was born to be fat, and sometimes I feel I am flying right into the face of Providence to try and get lean.”

“Try to get lean,” corrected Clara Pike severely. “Where did you study grammar?—I can’t say learn it.”

The Sin Twisters had come in together, their heads a mass of curl papers and their faces obscured by the clouds which were wont to linger there whenever there was any studying to be done.

“There are more important things in life than grammar,” began Flossie, with a dignity which immediately merged into a groan as Rebecca’s elbow hit her strained and aching arm.

“What’s going on here?” asked Belle Eaton, appearing with a bathrobe over her night-dress, and her eyes showing the effects of a first nap.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Winifred is about to go on. She is full of something that we will never hear if you folks don't hurry and get yourselves fixed!" Lillian punctuated her words by pushing Belle down on the foot of the bed and jerking Marguerite Southy, a senior, into the room so suddenly that her glasses flew off. "Now, Winifred, what is it?"

"It's Sairy Mary Betts and the scholarship fund, and Moses Carter, who used to be one of Sarah Mary's 'steadies,' according to Mrs. Sweet."

The Sin Twisters, scenting romance, sat up so alertly that all their curl papers were set in motion, but romance was not Winifred's theme.

"To make a long story short ——" she began.

"Who wants it made short?" Erma interrupted. "Tell all there is to tell."

"This Moses Carter, then, is a rich farmer who lives some five miles out of the city on the Lake Road. He has a big dairy farm of blooded stock, and sells registered milk."

"Is that a kind of patent milk?" asked Flossie innocently.

"It is," recited Clara glibly. "It's warranted under the Pure Food Law to reduce flesh at the rate of five pounds per quart at a dollar per."

When order was restored and Winifred had explained that registered milk means that milk and

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

barns and animals are in the best sanitary condition possible, she continued :

" This Carter is a bachelor on account of Sarah Mary's changing her name from Davis to Betts instead of to Carter—my authority being Mrs. Sweet. But ' be that as it may be,' as Mrs. Sweet says, Mr. Carter has lately announced that he intends to give away five thousand dollars before he dies ——"

Lillian sprang to her feet and made a wild rush toward her wardrobe door. " Give me my hat and coat," she cried. " I want to get to the Lake Road before that five thousand is all gone."

Winifred raised her voice above the uproar which followed. " Wait until to-morrow, Lillian, and you can go and beg in dead earnest, for that is what Mrs. Betts wants us to do—she wants us to ask him for the rest of the money for our scholarship."

" Saying he'd give five thousand—and giving it —ain't exactly like Moses Carter," Mrs. Betts had told Winifred, " and yet ag-ain, it ain't unlike him. He is always doing un-heard-of things, but up to this time givin' away money hasn't been am-ong 'em."

Then she had laughed until her sides shook. " He says the cap-tains of industry in this country have begun to give a-way the money

A JUNIOR CO-ED

they leave before they're dead and as he is a captain of the farm industry he's goin' to go and do like-wise. And he's put up a new schoolhouse out near Cartersville, and give the Presbyterians on the Green Valley Road a new bell, so I guess he's going to do as he says, and I want that you should go and try for the rest of that fifteen hundred."

Therefore, in a conclave which became earnest before midnight when all the girls in the house were gathered into Lillian's room, it was decided that Adelaide, Lillian and Winifred should go forth on the morrow and "try."

"You can't do more than fail, girls," said Marguerite Southy adjusting her glasses. "It is at least an opening, and it seems necessary for us to take advantage of every possibility—Alpha Gamma is so far behind in this matter of the scholarships."

"And so much depends on our success," added Lillian mournfully, looking down at the third finger of her right hand. A worried frown appeared between her eyes. The absence of that ring gave her many an anxious hour, and she never passed the door of the registrar's office now without a guilty feeling that he might appear and demand the redemption of her property.

The day following, directly after dinner, the three started forth to "beard the lion in his den,

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

the Douglas in his hall," as Winifred chanted on the way to the kitchen where they went to ask Mrs. Betts for a parting word of advice.

Hitching up the front of her dress, Sarah Mary shook her finger at them emphatically. "Take Moses as he comes, and don't let him mad you!"

After the girls had reached the street, Winifred ran back and put her head in at the kitchen door. "Mrs. Betts," she asked, "shall we tell Mr. Carter that you sent us?"

Mrs. Betts, feeding Druisy, did not look around, but her shoulders heaved. "Not un-less you have to. Moses, he has been trying to find out by Anne Sweet where I am. He knows I'm in a chapter house, and that's all."

There was but little conversation among the trio on the way through the city and out on the Lake Road trolley. Occasionally Lillian would break forth with the quotation, "'Take Moses as he comes, and don't let him mad you!'" This detached sentence would elicit a giggle from the others, only to be followed by a rather depressed silence.

Thus they came to the end of the trolley line five miles beyond the boundaries of the city. Then, being directed by the motorman, they walked along the country road, snow covered, in the direction of a group of buildings which

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the motorman called "Cartersville." The group stood at the end of the valley against the hills which surrounded the lake. There were picturesque red barns two stories high and square. There were flaming yellow barns low and long and many windowed ending in tall round towers—silos, as Adelaide explained to the mystified Lillian.

"They hold fodder for cattle," she explained; "corn and stuff all ground up and moist. The yellow ones must be cow barns and the red ones horse barns—see? The weather-vanes are horses, and there is a long hen-house with all the south side in windows. Its weather-vane is a rooster. Why, girls, he certainly is a captain of the farming industry, and that's no joke!"

Cartersville lay in the midst of a farm of four hundred acres of valley land, rich and well cultivated. Here and there among the barns, and plainly second to them in the owner's estimation, stood the tenement houses, neat and white.

But it was the owner's residence which presently threw the rest of Cartersville into deep shadow. The girls turned in at a small gate set in a picket fence which evidently surrounded a large yard, although the enclosure was so full of hemlocks growing, their branches untrimmed, close to the ground, that the eye could not pierce the foliage. A narrow, raised board walk wound

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

deviously from the gate, a necessary guide through the labyrinth of evergreens that shut out the sight of the cheerful barns, the beautiful hills, the fertile valley and even the welcome blue of the sky.

As the trio advanced single file, their feet resounding hollowly on the raised planks, Winifred in the rear shivered and mumbled :

"I feel like saying with the poet, 'Good-bye, vain world, good-bye.'"

"It's creepy, that's what it is," whispered Adelaide, as a wind caused the trees enfolding them to sigh dismally.

A sharp turn in the walk brought them in front of double doors set in a great square stone house painted white. The stones were jagged and irregular, firmly cemented together. The walls were evidently of great thickness, as shown by the casing of the double doors. The windows were narrow and high, and the big brazenly white pile was unrelieved even by a porch, while against the sides scraped and moaned the hemlocks, stretching themselves across the windows as though jealous of the entrance of the sun.

"I'm looking for a drawbridge and a moat," whispered Lillian, nervously putting out her hand toward the bell-knob as she glanced half fearfully about the place.

They stood in the extension of the deep door-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

sill, huddled together and speaking in hushed tones. "We ought to have brought Mrs. Munroe with us," said the senior in a worried tone. "I never thought of a chaperon. I'm afraid the other seniors won't approve."

"Too late to repent now," muttered Lillian as she gave the heavy bell-knob a great wrench.

The result was so appalling that the three backed precipitately off the sill and stood staring and gasping on the door-stone. For from beneath their feet, seemingly, the jangle of the bell echoed and reëchoed and thundered as no door-bell ever thundered before. Away from their immediate vicinity rolled the sound, increasing in volume until the whole interior of the house was filled with the echoes and thunders.

"I'm going to run," exclaimed Lillian, half laughing and half crying. "Bluebeard must live in here, or else Giant Despair," and she had actually turned to flee when half of the door swung back and a very prosaic and rather slatternly girl presented herself.

"We—we should like to see Mr. Carter," stammered Adelaide.

The girl smiled. "Have you ever rung that bell before?" she asked shrewdly.

"No," Lillian burst out, "and I never want to again!"

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

At this the girl threw her head back and laughed outright. "I don't blame you. It scared me out of a year's growth when I first come. It's fixed to ring under the floor down cellar, because Mr Carter found it would echo better down there."

"Well, what does he want it to echo for?" asked Lillian, still indignant. She could not forgive the bell the fright it had given her.

"Oh, that's Mr. Carter," replied the girl carelessly. "You set down here, and I'll try and get 'im for you."

She went out and closed the door behind her, leaving the girls in an immense gloomy room which was already steeped in twilight, although it was scarcely two o'clock. It was low and yellow of ceiling, and its walls were covered with paper aged and curiously patterned. Across the paper's dingy background pranced a black horse bearing a wonderful rider booted and spurred and plainly bent on the destruction of a cluster of red roses that, from an artistic standpoint, merited destruction.

"We are certainly in a prehistoric house," whispered Lillian. She meant colonial, but no one noticed the mistake, all being under the influence of a curious spell.

"Look at the grandfather's clock," ejaculated Winifred, who sat between Lillian and Adelaide

A JUNIOR CO-ED

on a high-backed, uncushioned mahogany settee standing at right angles to the immense fireplace.

"It's a great-grandfather's clock," corrected Adelaide.

The mahogany piece in question stood, ceiling high, between the narrow, uncurtained front windows, ticking off time loudly as it had ticked since its present owner's great-grandmother brought it over from Switzerland. There was but little furniture to relieve the wilderness of space which the apartment presented; a few ponderous armchairs, a variety of guns on racks against the walls, a closed desk beside the fireplace and an old-fashioned big heavy round table littered with books, magazines and papers.

"The floor is the only modern thing here," whispered Adelaide. "It's wood, and badly laid at that, with no rugs. Mercy!"

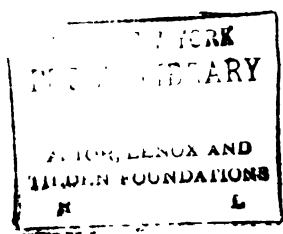
"But this fireplace!" murmured Winifred dreamily.

She was gazing into the depths of a cavern such as our forefathers used for great backlogs which required a horse to draw into the house. In the rear of the cavern a pile of logs crackled and snapped, casting a weird half light into the gloom of the great bare room.

Lillian stretched out her feet on the broad stone hearth with an air of half-fearful ease. "Girls, it's



“THE FLOOR IS THE ONLY MODERN THING HERE”



CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

certainly a Bluebeard's den here—I'm awfully frightened. My heart's thumping like an anvil!"

"Trip-hammer," corrected Winifred. "Here he comes!"

The double doors, which gave into the room, swung in noisily, and preceded by two hounds, Moses Carter clattered in, so modern and bluff and red and hearty that the spell which the gloom and antiquity of the house had cast over the trio was at once dispelled. Although not a fat man, Moses' face was perfectly round and possessed a cherubic appearance, which might or might not be in keeping with his general disposition—his acquaintances differed widely on that subject.

"How d'ye do, girls?" he inquired, shaking hands heartily, his greeting losing all trace of familiarity in its cordiality. "No use telling me your names. I couldn't recollect 'em the next minute. I have dealings with too many folks to pay much attention to names. Come here, you hounds!"

He boxed the dogs' ears—a process which caused them to wag their tails—drew a chair in front of the fireplace, kicked the logs into a greater blaze with his high-topped boots, and sat down, continuing without a pause:

"Come to see the premises, have you? Wall, they're something to see, if I do say it as ought not. Nothing like 'em around this county. I'll

A JUNIOR CO-ED

warm and dry my feet some and then we'll start out with a peek at the horses. I've just got a new span of blacks that's the prettiest little fellars you ever see. Nothing like 'em in this county, if I do say it as oughtn't. And I know you all like horses. Look as if you did. Now, if you'll just excuse me I'll take off these wet boots and change 'em and dry my feet. Don't believe you ever saw an old-fashioned bootjack like this, did you? I made it. I can do a lot of things like that to pass away the time. Of course you know that a man with four hundred acres of land to run, and one hundred blooded cows, and a poultry yard that's the wonder of the country—if I do say it as shouldn't—and a half-dozen hired men—he ain't got a blame thing to do but make bootjacks and tinker around the house—Slav, you double-jointed ijut, let that girl's foot alone, can't you? Turk, you're about as lawless as the country I named you for. Git out!"

It was Adelaide's business, she being a senior, to state the object of their call, and during this monologue she had striven to do her duty. Twice she had cleared her throat. Three times she had said, "I—we." Now as Mr. Carter stuck his stockinged feet out toward the fire she whispered, "I give it up," and sank back shocked and dignified at the sight of the blue yarn socks.

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

"And I suppose, girls, after you've seen the barns you'd like to see the house—everybody does who gets in here. It is a queer old house, I know. Oldest in this county, that's sure. Part of it was built before the Revolution, when the Five Nations was on the war-path. Daughters of the Revolution have tried to get it. Wall, let 'em try. It keeps 'em busy, and don't hurt me. It belongs to Mose Carter yet, and he has money enough to keep it, if I do say it as shouldn't."

Here Lillian spoke quickly, in a high strained voice, her left hand grasping the third finger of her right to give her courage. "Yes, Mr. Carter, we heard you had money, and that you wanted to give away five thousand dollars. That's why we came."

"Hey?" Carter wheeled around slowly in his chair and looked his visitors carefully over. "You said you wanted to see the premises."

"Oh, no." Lillian's voice sank to its usual beguiling cadence. "You said that, we didn't. We are college students, and we heard that you were giving away a lot of money."

"Did you?" Moses rearranged himself once more so that he could look at his visitors as well as toast his feet. "I guess every one in Huntingdon has heard that same thing."

His tone was the essence of good-natured toler-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

ance, and Lillian's spirits arose with a bound. Her heart ceased to "beat like an anvil," all her dimples being once more in evidence. The other two, seeing that the social favorite of the Hill was herself again, settled back to watch the reduction of Moses Carter, and correct the little business details which Lillian was sure to get twisted.

"I think," continued Lillian in a confidential burst, "it's lovely of you to give away your money before you die. You'll enjoy doing it so much more than as though you waited till afterward."

Adelaide strangled behind her handkerchief, and Mr. Carter's eyes twinkled until the skin around the corners was drawn into masses of fine wrinkles. He looked like a gourmand settling down to a dinner of terrapin and duck.

"Yes, I think myself I'd enjoy it more before," he observed, "and guess the other captains of industry think that way too."

"Oh, yes," Lillian assured him, adding, "Now, may I tell you all about the scholarship?"

She bent toward her host in the assured yet deferential and altogether winning way which made her so irresistible to the "weaker sex," as she named it in the presence of women only.

Mr. Carter ruffled up his hair and turned his feet to bring the other side of the socks against the

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

heat. "Of course, I want to hear. Nothing I'd like better. A man with four hundred acres of land to run hain't got a thing to do but listen."

Winifred moved uneasily, but her suspicions were at once disarmed by Mr. Carter's open countenance and his eyes beaming in a most gratifying way at the engaging Lillian, who, with various addenda, foot-notes and low corrections from the other girls told the story of the efforts on the Hill to found scholarships.

"Our college needs a part of that five thousand dollars," she began confidently.

"I never see the time it didn't," said Mr. Carter genially. He did not appear displeased at the announcement, however, and Lillian's confidence received no check.

Unbuttoning her handsome fur coat, she talked rapidly, surprised and delighted to find the garrulous Moses changed in a twinkling to such an appreciative listener.

"And when," she ended, "we heard that you had given a bell to the schoolhouse here and built a church on the Green Valley——"

"Built a schoolhouse and given a bell to the church," softly from Winifred.

"Why, we got ready and came right out here to ask you to help us out with our scholarship—give the rest of the two thousand, I mean."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"And how much is there left to give?" asked Mr. Carter blandly, drawing in his feet.

"Only about sixteen hundred," returned Lillian enthusiastically.

Mr. Carter selected a pair of shoes from the collection of footwear standing against the wall, and drew them on, elevating his feet in the process until his knees touched his nose. This process was attended by sundry grunts and short groans.

"Sixteen hundred ain't much," he assured Lillian presently, "to a captain of industry, even of farming industry. Yes, I've made up my mind to give away five thousand dollars before I die, and I don't care who knows it, nor who asks for it."

Having one shoe laced up, Moses banged that foot down hard on the hearthstone and raised the other. Adelaide, at Winifred's right, was nearly in convulsions of laughter behind her handkerchief at Lillian's methods and statements, as well as at the sight of their host's occupation. But Winifred, watching him narrowly, recalled Mrs. Betts' last adjuration, "'Take Mose as he comes, and don't let him mad you!'"

"Then," Lillian broke in eagerly, "you will help us, won't you?"

"Why, surely," responded Moses easily. "I haven't turned a single one off empty-handed

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

that's come to me since I said I was going to give away that five thousand. Sure I'll help you out."

He slapped the other foot down and leaning over regarded his shoes with pride. Mr. Carter was somewhat vain of his small feet, and always wore the best "foot-gear" obtainable.

"Sure I'll help you," he repeated turning his face wreathed in its most cherubic smile on Lillian.

He arose and opened his desk while Lillian looked on in arrogant pride, and Winifred and Adelaide drew long and relieved breaths. Lillian held up her right hand and touched the third finger with an emphatic nod. Winifred smiled and dismissed her apprehensions on the subject of Moses Carter's "madding" propensities. He was surely a peculiar, but, withal, a most benevolent gentleman.

"About sixteen hundred," murmured Lillian again in an abstracted tone.

Moses took from one of the pigeonholes of the desk a long narrow book and selected a pen. Then he paused in an attitude of mild remonstrance to consider Lillian's murmur.

"I don't believe I better give you all the rest of that scholarship. What would you girls have to keep you busy up there on the Hill all winter if I should?"

Adelaide laughed. "We find enough to do to

A JUNIOR CO-ED

keep up with our studies—and a few other things. The girls would feel awfully grateful to you if you did help us out like that.”

Mr. Carter bit the end of his pen. “Gratitude,” he smiled, “is all the pay a body wants in exchange for money.”

“Isn’t he lovely?” whispered Lillian ecstatically.

Again Winifred moved uneasily and did not reply. He had changed so since his entrance. The man talking and the man listening—she could not quite reconcile them.

“Still,” mused Mr. Carter, tearing out a check, “I shouldn’t want to take away any gratitude that belonged to some one else. There may be another man that’s wanting to give away some before he dies and so I’ll leave him a little chance—what name shall I put on the check?”

He looked up at Lillian, and Lillian answered, visibly swelling with the pride of her achievement, “Lillian Antwerp.”

The pen scratched industriously for a moment, while the fire crackled and the dogs snored and barked in their sleep near their master’s chair. Then, with the slip in his hand, Moses arose and, simultaneously, arose the three girls. With the slip still in his hand, he lighted a tall, old-fashioned swinging lamp over the table and resumed the

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

garrulous strain which had marked the early moments of the call.

"Ever see a lamp like this? It's the oldest in this county. One of the first oil lamps ever made. I presume there ain't one like it within a thousand miles, if I do say it as shouldn't. You must come again, girls, and see over the house. I've got some old looms and spinning-wheels that would make you green with envy, if I do say it as shouldn't."

By this time he had pulled the great doors open, and still disregarding the hungry look which Lillian bent on the folded paper in his hand, stepped out on the door-stone.

"And when you come again, I'll show you as pretty horses as this county holds, too, and cattle, and sheep, and poultry."

Smilingly he held out the slip, unfolded now, his eyes glued on Lillian's face, his own wreathed in anticipatory smiles.

"Thank you," she exclaimed heartily, and took the check.

As she did, both Winifred and Adelaide saw the figure named thereon, and Adelaide nearly fell off the door-stone in her wrath.

The check was made out for five dollars.

Lillian's face was a mere scarlet flame as she disappeared among the evergreens, the board walk

A JUNIOR CO-ED

fairly smoking in her wake. Adelaide followed equally angry and speechless, and Winifred was about to follow, when she had a sudden inspiration. It was only by chance that she had seen the denomination of the check, so far away had she stood when Lillian took it. Therefore, assuming ignorance, she stopped and looking back at Mr. Carter with a smile as bland as his own, she said as genially :

“Mrs. Betts will enjoy learning that she sent us to the right man, after all. She was sure you would give generously.”

Mr. Carter's lower jaw sagged slightly. A look of alarm overspread his cherubic countenance. He leaned against the house in a comical attitude of dismay.

“Mrs. Betts? Sarah Mary Betts?”

Winifred nodded. “She cooks at our chapter house. She is the one who sent us to you.”

For a long moment Mr. Carter blinked in rapid thought. Then, without a word, he jumped off the door-stone and pounded stiffly down the walk in pursuit of the check. When Winifred reached the gate she found the girls bewildered, but with good humor restored, examining a hundred dollar bill, while Mr. Carter with a very red face was tearing up the check with nervous fingers as he explained :

CHECKS OF DIFFERENT SORTS

"This check was a joke. I have to have my little jokes. I enjoy 'em, and they don't do any one any harm." His voice grew more and more mellow. "Now, that bill ain't all I aim to give you, either—not quite," cautiously—"but, as I haven't any more handy by me now, I'll have to fetch it."

"Why not send it," asked Lillian once more beaming, "and save yourself a lot of trouble?"

"Why—er—I have business up on the Hill," rejoined Moses blandly. "I've got to go up there anyway in a day or two, so I'll just step around to your house and hand it in."

CHAPTER VII

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

WINIFRED, on her way to class, emerged from the vestibule of the chapter house just as Sayles Cooper came around the corner from the kitchen door. Raising his hat, he slackened his speed courteously in order to allow her to walk up the Hill alone if she wished. But Winifred did not so desire. Therefore, she paused with a cordial "Good-morning—if you can call such a morning as this 'good.'"

The boy, with a pleased expression on his square face, joined her.

It was a bitterly cold day. Every other young man on the Hill wore an overcoat, but Army Blue swung along without any visible signs of being chilled, although he was attired only in the old blue coat too long in the skirt and too broad even for his unusually broad shoulders. He wore gloves that morning, however, thanks to Mrs. Sweet. That lady had deliberately rummaged about in his room until she found the pair which he was accustomed to wear on the way across the city and

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

remove when he came within sight of the Hill, so ragged were the fingers. Making use of one of "Louisy's" kids—which that young lady had not yet discarded—her cousin proceeded with a relish to patch and mend Army Blue's hand-wear until she was able to lay a presentable pair of gloves on his table. Then, according to her custom, she looked her grimmest and most forbidding when he stopped at her door to offer her hearty thanks.

"Winter is almost on us," he remarked cheerily to Winifred now as he fell into step and relieved her of her books.

"Almost!" exclaimed Winifred with a merry laugh. "If this is not quite winter I pity ourselves when real winter comes." She glanced about at the snow-covered ground, and bent her head to receive a blast of stinging wind which swept with a shriek over the hills and among the college buildings. "Of course this is only November, but up here winter gets its full growth, usually, by the last of this month."

While she was speaking she was listening to a curious little rustle which came with every step that her companion took and attended his every motion. It was faint but unmistakable—rustle, rustle, rustle. "Mrs. Betts is right," she thought. "I'm going to speak to Landon about it."

Two students passed them, one reading aloud

A JUNIOR CO-ED

from the Huntingdon Weekly, which was on sale that morning. "Here's the scholarship report," he told the other, "and—whew!—the Weekly—and that means, of course, M. Gussie Barker—is almost out of sight, and here it's only six weeks since the thing was started. She lacks only three hundred."

"Isn't that fine?" exclaimed Winifred when the men had passed. "She is so clever and bright that I suspect the ones she writes to can't resist her letters."

The boy's fine eyes glowed. "I just wish I could do something myself for those scholarships," he burst out. "I tell you you don't know what it means to a fellow not to be obliged to pay down for his tuition."

"Oh, yes, I do," exclaimed Winifred quickly and frankly, "for I have been fortunate enough to have a scholarship given me for my whole course. Otherwise, I'm sure I don't know what I should do."

He turned toward her eagerly. "I am glad," he began, and then stammered, "I mean, I am glad you told me. It makes me feel ——" He paused uncertainly. "You see I couldn't be here if it were not that the registrar finally discovered there was one free tuition left ——"

"I am glad"—Winifred's interruption was so swift and frank that Army Blue never suspected

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

that she knew more about that same free tuition than he did—"so glad that the registrar made the discovery."

"Glad!" cried the boy; "well, so was I, some!"

And then as they walked slowly along the winding walk, he told her all about it, led on by her sympathy and understanding, for, although she did not know it, her struggles during her freshman year at Mrs. Sweet's, as recounted by that lady, had been a great comfort to this freshman.

"You see they told me at prep school," he went on earnestly, "that no one need think of tuition in a college—that if there weren't enough scholarships to go around, they'd take my note. That's what I wanted, to give a note. And I tell you when I went out of the office the first time I was the bluest fellow in this city. I knew it was 'good-bye college' for a while, and I haven't any time to fool away. I walked as though there were weights on my feet, a ton to each, but it was the best way I could have walked because the registrar didn't know my name and I should have lost the chance if I'd got beyond call. I'd gone a good piece down Third Avenue when I heard that little newsboy—you know Newsy?"

"Don't I!" responded Winifred warmly.

"Well, the registrar had put Newsy on my track and—and," Army Blue turned his head

A JUNIOR CO-ED

away, "the best sound I ever heard was that kid's voice yelling to me to come back and see the registrar again."

He stopped a moment. "I can understand," said Winifred softly.

"Somehow, I feel I owe Newsy a good turn for being the go-between there," Army Blue continued. "I'd like a chance to pay him back." The boy seemed to long for chances to pay back all the debts of kindness he had contracted.

"And then you went back to the office," Winifred reminded him. She was interested to hear what the registrar had told him.

"Yes, I went back, and the registrar told me he had just found one free tuition available for the year and I should have the use of it. Well, I gave my note—I should rather do that way—payable after I get through college, but you see it let me out finely."

"Yes, I see," said Winifred softly.

"I tell you—nothing mattered after that a while!" exclaimed Army Blue abruptly as they reached the steps of the Hall of Languages, and he opened the vestibule door and stood aside for her to enter.

As she passed him that curious little rustle again reached her ears and she quoted to herself, "'After that nothing mattered.'"

In the dressing-room Lillian seized her and

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

asked the question which she had propounded a dozen times a day for three days: "Winifred Lowe, has that man Carter put in an appearance yet?"

"Not unless he has arrived during the last fifteen minutes."

"Isn't he the meanest! And there he said he'd drop in on us within two or three days and bring another contribution."

"Take Moses Carter as he comes and don't let him mad you," quoted Winifred. "Mrs. Betts isn't worrying any, I notice, about his not coming. She told me this morning not to fret, but keep still and wait."

"That's very good advice," replied Lillian crossly, "as long as waiting is the only thing we can do. But if there was any way to make Mr. Carter repent——"

"You'd find it," interrupted Winifred. "Mr. Carter, however, seems so abundantly able to take care of himself that I'm afraid you'll not have the pleasure of punishing him."

"He made sport of me, and I didn't know it—and he's a man!" Lillian spoke as though the limit of human endurance had been reached. Mr. Carter's treatment had been a novel sensation to her. "But as long as he has said he'd give I shall do something more than wait by and by, let me tell you!"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"It's been only three days since our journey down the Lake Road," Winifred reminded her. "And you know that Mr. Carter has four hundred acres of land and one hundred head of cattle——"

But Lillian, her fingers stuffed into her ears, was running out of the deserted room.

At the head of the first flight of stairs, Winifred had secured her copy of the college Weekly, and now, on her way to the third floor, turned, the first thing, as did all its readers, to the reports of the scholarships. This was one of M. Gussie's most effective ideas—"Sort of a porous plaster," Landon explained grimly, "because it draws well." Every week the literary editor reported all the contributions to each scholarship under its proper heading. For instance, under the name Psi Upsilon was the sum total of all previous contributions plus any new donation with the name of the donor. In this way the college public kept accurate tab on the movement, and competition was strengthened.

As Winifred read, her face indexed various emotions. Her shoulders shrugged as she saw:

"Alpha Gamma:

"Total, \$425.75.

"New contributions: One hundred dollars from Moses Carter, Lake Valley Road."

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

Then she smiled as, turning the page, she read:

"Huntingdon Weekly News:

"Total, \$1,700.

"New contributions: One hundred and fifty dollars from A. L. Biddle, Pasadena, California. One hundred and sixty dollars from Miss Mary Gaston, Savor, Oregon."

"By good rights," thought Winifred, "that report ought to be headed 'The M. Gussie Barker Scholarship.' And as long as Alpha Gamma can't get in ahead, I'm glad it will be Gussie."

Here her eyes fell on:

"The Bee Hive:

"Total, \$55.75.

"New contributions: Five dollars from Miss Laura Smith, Rochester, New York."

"The Bee Hive is in line for the booby prize," one of the Bee Hive girls had told Punch good-naturedly. "But we don't give up—not we! We have years in which to raise the money."

"But not money from which to make the raise," had been Punch's characteristic addition to the remark.

As she ascended the stairs to the third floor, Winifred, looking for Landon, saw M. Gussie

A JUNIOR CO-ED

standing with her hand on the knob of the door leading to the trigonometry class room listening.

"We're late," she whispered as Winifred approached. "He has just called your name."

Winifred nodded. "Let's wait until there is a stir—I hate to go in during roll call—my feet get so mixed up with each other."

M. Gussie nearly giggled aloud. Only her muff, thrust so hurriedly against her mouth that the fur choked her, prevented. And before she recovered Winifred was murmuring in her ear:

"What a splendid record you're making with the scholarship. We're all proud of you."

"The News is making it," corrected M. Gussie brusquely.

Winifred pinched her arm. "That's fiction, as we all know. It's you we're proud of."

M. Gussie flushed with pleasure. Her dark eyes shone softly with affection as she turned them on the shorter girl. One word of praise from Winifred was worth many sentences from any one else.

"It's mother," she explained still brusque, but her voice was low and gentle. "I've got her interested, and when mother is interested things move. See here."

Winifred opened the envelope thrust into her hands and read: "' Please find enclosed my check for two hundred dollars to be applied on the

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

scholarship fund which your mother tells me you are collecting for Huntingdon College.'” The name signed was so odd that Winifred remembered it. “Asa Hotaling.”

“Dear me,” she whispered, returning the letter, “we shall soon be saying about you and your scholarship, ‘One, two, three, out goes she’—but listen!”

The monotonous voice of the instructor within the room gave place to a shuffling of feet.

“It’s time to go in,” Gussie turned the door-knob, “and make our excuses to the powers that be!”

After class, Winifred deliberately placed herself in an angle of the hall on the first floor where she could command a view of the ascent from the basement laboratories in which, she knew, Landon Stearns had been at work during the last period.

When he appeared, Army Blue was with him. They came slowly up the stairs together talking earnestly. On the younger man’s face were the lines of care and expression of determination left there by a life of struggle, the marks of which were absent from Landon’s fine, good-natured face and jolly dark eyes. The one who was younger in years was older in experience.

“Landon has never had to lie awake nights planning for his next week’s room rent,” thought

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred. "That brings the crow's-feet!" She judged from personal knowledge so far as the rent was concerned. As for the "crow's-feet," there were none as yet discernible around her soft blue eyes.

But Landon's money had not undermined a staunch character, nor destroyed the democratic spirit instilled in him by the senior Stearns. There was in his treatment of Cooper none of the patronage which wealth gives to poverty, only the natural superiority of the upper classman over the freshman.

At the head of the stairs one of the freshmen put his hand on Cooper's sleeve and led him away, while Landon came to a standstill in front of Winifred, stopped by the throng of students pressing out of the main entrance bound for chapel exercises.

Winifred touched his arm, and, with a start, he became aware of her near proximity. She shrank back further into her corner and Landon willingly followed.

"Going to chapel?" he asked.

Paying no attention to the question, she began hurriedly, "I want to tell you something. Promise you won't repeat it."

"If that isn't just like a girl," scoffed Landon. "Of course I won't. Fire ahead."

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

"I walked up this morning with Army Blue."

"Don't I know it? Couldn't see any one else on the campus, could you?" Landon's voice indicated even parts of amusement and pique.

"Were you on the campus?" asked Winifred innocently. "No, I didn't see you—Mr. Cooper is very interesting," demurely.

"I suppose so," dryly. "He must be. I nearly ran over you and said, 'I beg your pardon,' but you didn't hear."

"Did you really speak to me? Well, perhaps I was listening, not to what Army Blue was saying, but to the queerest little rustling about him—Landon Stearns, Mrs. Betts says—and after this morning I believe her—that that boy keeps from freezing by wearing newspapers under his coat. Do you believe it? I do," all in one breath.

Landon's affected displeasure disappeared. He stood staring at Winifred, his lips parted and an idea struggling visibly to the surface. "That same rustling," he muttered. "I've heard it myself—and idiot that I am—I thought it was his shirt front—that it was too stiff. Might have known better! He has no stiff shirt front. His coat he keeps buttoned to the chin—of course it's paper—Winifred, he's got to have a coat if I have to sit on him ——"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"No," interrupted Winifred quickly. "We mustn't hurt him, and I see he is awfully proud. He can go without and suffer better than he can ——" she paused.

"Accept what looks to him like charity—the idiot!" Landon's tone showed helpless irritation.

"But I believe you can help him without his suspecting where help comes from," insisted Winifred.

"That would be bully—I beg your pardon—fine. How?"

"Isn't he about the same size as your father?"

Landon thought a moment. "He is that—pretty much the same size and build."

"Then," concluded Winifred decidedly, "your father can help us out in this way."

Three minutes later Landon squared his shoulders and drew a long breath of relief. "Mother will engineer it. I'll write to her." He looked down at his own handsome top coat and added, "Newspapers to keep warm—and he's forging to the top of the heap, too, in his class work, our freshmen say ——" Then with an abrupt change of subject, "Winifred, you are a dabster at planning a way out of the woods!"

"You've heard the old saying," returned the girl lightly, "'Necessity it is the mother of in-

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

vention.' Well, the necessity has always been with me, and it has led to the invention."

Before the last word was out of her mouth, a whirlwind seemed to envelop the angle which held the two plotters, and out of the whirlwind Lillian's voice emerged :

"I don't care a picayune if I am interrupting! I'm so excited I can hardly breathe! Winifred Lowe, don't you dare go to chapel. You come right down to the house with me, because he is there and I'm wild to see what he has brought. I started down the walk and there are the grays—such splendid horses—driving back and forth in front of the house, and I know he is back with Sairy Mary in the kitchen. Come on, quick!"

Winifred was only less agitated than Lillian when she saw Mr. Carter's beautiful iron grays, ahead of his fine rubber-tired carriage, being driven slowly along College Road by one of the "hands" from the Lake Road. To Fourth Avenue the span pranced, champing their bits. There they turned and trotted back past the chapter house to Third Avenue, only to turn and repeat their former trip.

"When I write to mamma," Lillian ran on as the two girls hurried down the walk, "that a handsomer outfit is at the service of our cook than ever waits for one of us, she'll think the

A JUNIOR CO-ED

world here is further out of joint than ever, won't she? But oh, I am so excited!" Lillian reveled in excitement.

Arrived at the house, the two betook themselves to the room occupied by the Sin Twisters, over the kitchen. The Twisters were present, and being apprised of the situation, became at once alert. Romance was evidently stalking in their kitchen.

"We'll open the window," proposed Erma in a stage whisper, "and see him when he comes out. After what you girls have told, I'm dying to get a glimpse of him."

Clara had the window raised before her roommate ceased to speak, and four girls knelt in front of it ready to pop their heads out.

"It would serve us right," muttered Winifred, "if we caught an earache apiece."

"I don't see why!" rejoined Lillian indignantly. "It's perfectly right to look—it's not peeking—we just want to see him."

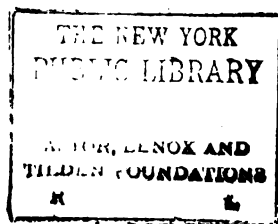
"Ex-actly," confirmed Clara in so excellent an imitation of Mrs. Betts that the others giggled.

"B-o-o," shivered Erma. "Hand me my fur, chum. It's on the bed—— Sh! Here he comes."

Four heads were poked cautiously out of the window and four pairs of eyes were rolled down-



"IT'S ALL RIGHT FOR A STARTER"



SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

ward to command a view of the kitchen door, out of which stamped Moses Carter clad in a fur coat which covered him from neck to heels.

The man was followed by a fresh, pleasant voice saying, "Yes, I'll hand it to her right away—and I hope she won't be disappointed in the a-mount."

"It's our check," whispered Lillian. "Oh, dear! It must be dreadfully small!"

Erma's elbow in her ribs suppressed her as Mr. Carter reasoned in an amazed voice, "Disappointed, Sairy? Why, I give 'er a hundred on the spot, and it strikes me there ain't anything in that check likely to disappoint 'er if she has any common sense!"

Mrs. Betts' reply soothed but puzzled all her listeners. "It's all right for a starter, Moses—just a start-er. Now be sure and tell that hired girl of yours that I'll send the re-ceipt for the cake to-morrow."

At the first clause of her reply Mr. Carter removed his fur cap and scratched his head. At the last clause he clapped his cap on again and remonstrated:

"I told you, Sairy, I was coming up here again in a few days, and I'd just call around——"

"A two cent stamp will carry that re-ceipt right to your door," interrupted Mrs. Betts firmly. "A man with so much to look after as you have can't

A JUNIOR CO-ED

go gal-loping over the country a-huntin' up receipts."

Lillian literally hugged herself. "I simply love Mrs. Betts," she murmured, but Erma's elbow was plied vigorously again.

"I've got to come up anyway," protested Mr. Carter, "and ——" he interrupted himself, visibly brightening. "Oh, by the way, I've got a mess of those gillyflowers that you like so well. I meant to fetch you some to-day, but I forgot. Now, when I come up around here I'll just ——"

"We got some gillyflowers long ago," interposed Mrs. Betts amiably. "They came with a mess of cooking apples."

Moses backed down the steps, while Lillian hugged herself again ecstatically. He was muttering something inaudible to the four in the window.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Betts made answer cruelly, "I know the red pop-corn is the best, and so I had the girls lay in a stock of it. Guess they have e-nough to last two years at the rate it ain't be-in' popped. No, don't litter this house with any pop-corn."

"What about hickory nuts?" Moses' hope seemed to revive. "I've got some A No. 1 beauties."

"Some of the girls," Mrs. Betts' tones were fairly dulcet now, "bought a bushel yester-day of the boy who does our coal work. He went and pick-ed

SCHOLARSHIP REPORTS

'em up himself—and when the snow was fly-ing, too ! ”

“ Say, Sarah,” exclaimed Moses desperately from the lower step, “ is there a blamed thing that those pesky girls hain’t laid in a stock of ? ”

Mrs. Betts’ laugh again rang out as clear as a bell. “ Law, yes, Moses ; money for that precious scholarship they’re try-in’ to raise,” and the kitchen door slammed shut.

Mr. Carter stared at the outside of the door. Then he pulled his cap over his eyes and muttered, “ Wall, I’ll be up around here in a few days, come what may ! ”

As he stamped along the walk toward his prancing grays, Lillian scrambled to her feet and flew down the back stairs. Erma lowered the window softly, while Clara and Winifred sat back on their heels and looked at each other in guilty amusement.

“ It wasn’t really listening,” argued Winifred responding to the look on Clara’s face. “ We didn’t set out to listen.”

“ No, but we certainly ‘ set ’ down and listened just the same, and I’m glad we did ! ”

“ Your consciences must be tender, if that is troubling you,” exclaimed Erma scornfully, adding : “ Isn’t Mrs. Betts the richest thing in this house ? ”

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Here Lillian burst in at the door, waving a long narrow slip of paper and crying, "It's for two hundred, girls, a check for two hundred, and I'm going to report to M. Gussie before the sun goes down. Doesn't Mrs. Betts manage that bear beautifully?"

Clara, still sitting on the floor, looked up with a sage shake of her head. "She's had experience in management."

Lillian turned superior eyes on her. "Management, Clara, in the case of men, doesn't always come with experience."

"Even I can see that," retorted Clara heartlessly, "for witness your defeat at the hands of Moses Carter, who is as meek as Moses in the hands of Mrs. Betts!"

CHAPTER VIII

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

It was lunch time at the Alpha Gamma Chapter House. At the two long tables in the large dining-room were seated as many of the girls as were not detained on the Hill by work. Mrs. Betts' soul was always tried by the one o'clock absentees.

"I'm thinking of send-in' a notice to those men teachers up there," she threatened, "and tell 'em they have no business to keep the scholars till after one. Their wives ought to learn 'em bet-ter sense. One o'clock belongs to the cooks. I don't like to put cold vit-tles before my girls, nor yet warmed-ups."

Mrs. Munroe, the chaperon, presided at the head of one table, while the head of the other was occupied by the seniors in turn. Marguerite Southy now held the post of honor. Next to her sat Winifred, who was already in her place, her work on the Hill having ended at ten o'clock.

Janet had just brought on the soup, when the outer door burst open, admitting Flossie, rosy-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

cheeked and bright-eyed. Throwing her coat over the hall table, she dashed into the dining-room without waiting to remove her hat.

"Oh, I'm so hungry!" she cried. "I'm actually at starvation's door."

"History repeats itself!" retorted Winifred. "That's exactly what you've said every meal this week."

"I should think," added Rebecca, "that as many times as you have stood at starvation's door it would open some time and swallow you up."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Flossie. "You people who have nothing but a few rattling bones to nourish can talk. The colder it gets the hungrier I get."

"We'll raise on your board, then, in December," threatened Winifred.

Flossie laughed good-naturedly. "I'm going to practice chewing. Who is that man who says the more you chew the less you eat?"

"I choose fewer chews and more food," came a voice from the hall. The voice was followed immediately by Punch.

"It would be well for you—to say nothing of the rest of us—if you chose fewer puns," remarked Adelaide Prell sententiously.

"Shakespeare used 'em—why not I?"

"Simply because he didn't know better, and

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

you do! Please read what the rhetoric says of that form of wit."

Punch rolled her eyes and answered the senior with affected meekness: "'A low form of wit,' it says—meaning 'lowly,' of course, a term which well applies to your most humble truly."

"Girls," cried Lillian as a blast of cold air swept through the hall, she having forgotten to close the vestibule door, "girls, I met the wagon that brings the Weekly, and the man threw me a paper. And oh, girls, our addition to the scholarship this week goes way ahead of the others. It looks good to me, I tell you." There was a marked emphasis on the "me."

A dozen hands were outstretched for the paper, but Lillian tossed it across the table to Winifred with the command, "Read 'em."

"I should like to inquire," asked Clara Pike, "if the addition doesn't look as well to the rest of us as to you?"

Lillian shook her head energetically. "No-sir-ee. Every addition brings me nearer my ring, and I must confess," frankly, "that I'm not so much interested in the welfare of the college these days as in the recovery of my diamond."

Winifred, busy with her salad, did not at once take up the paper which Lillian had thrown beside her plate, and Erma Cunningham, who had

A JUNIOR CO-ED

finished her lunch, reached across the table and, securing it, began to read aloud, beginning with Gussie's weekly editorial on the scholarship contest as it had really come to be.

" 'The report handed in by the Alpha Gammas yesterday,' " she read, " 'of two hundred and sixty ' dollars raised, is the most encouraging received yet. There is one check for two hundred dollars from the owner of one of the best equipped and most up-to-date dairy farms in the state, Mr. Moses Carter, who lives on the Lake Road at the end of the trolley line. The sons and daughters of our alma mater certainly owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Carter.' "

"To Mrs. Betts," amended Marguerite, while Lillian abruptly asked Clara for the loan of a bottle of red ink.

"Red ink!" repeated Clara in amazement. "Now what's the connection between Mr. Carter and red ink?"

"Direct connection," retorted Lillian. "I'm going to mark around that editorial and send my paper to the 'up-to-date' farmer this very P. M."

"Good idea," approved Clara. "You may use up the whole bottleful!"

"We're ahead of Gussie, then, this week, aren't we?" asked Adelaide.

Erma turned the paper. "Why-ee! Gussie

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

hasn't a single additional dollar to her credit. Now, that hasn't happened before."

"It's a mistake," Winifred broke out suddenly. "I know that's a mistake, because I saw a check she received only—let's see—yes, four or five days ago. It was for two hundred, too, making her almost ready to report."

"See here!" cried Erma, paying no attention to Winifred's statement, "whom do you think stands next to us this week? Guess."

"The Psi U's. Landon Stearns is hustling, I know," volunteered Adelaide.

"The Dekes," quoth Clara, whose sympathies ran in that direction. "One of their men told me to-day that Mr. Grey has gone out of town after some men whom he thought would give." The young trustee was ever watchful of the interests of his alma mater.

"No one is hitting the truth," announced Erma. "It's the Bee Hive with two hundred dollars. Isn't that fine?"

"I wonder," remarked Flossie pensively, "if they got it by leaving off butter—Winifred says it's forty cents a pound."

"No, they evidently didn't 'leave off' anything for this," answered Erma. "It was given by—oh, such a funny name—Asa Hotaling."

Winifred paused with her fork on its way to her

A JUNIOR CO-ED

mouth. "That name sounds so familiar to me." Then her fork fell to her plate with a clatter. "It is familiar! What a perfectly lovely thing for M. Gussie to do."

"What do you mean?" asked half a dozen voices.

"I mean," cried Winifred unconsciously dramatic, "that the Bee Hive's two hundred came from Gussie. That check was sent to her. She showed it to me the day it came. Gussie is as generous as the day is long—and here she is so near the two thousand mark!"

The Weekly was forgotten while Winifred told about the letter which M. Gussie had received from Asa Hotaling.

"The name is so peculiar that it made an impression on me," she explained.

"It must be making an impression on the Bees," added Rebecca Bicknell. "The next time I see Gussie I shall hug her—unless," she added prudently, "we both have our big hats on!"

Winifred smiled happily at Rebecca, who had hitherto been one of the least enthusiastic Alpha Gammas on the subject of M. Gussie Barker.

"Now I wonder," began Lillian pensively, "if M. Gussie wouldn't write to more of those moneyed Westerners if she knew the scrape I'm in about the ring, and ——"

"I tell you what I wish," interrupted Punch

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

decidedly. "I wish I could have my postage furnished me out of Moses Carter's hundreds. I've spent a deal more sending out begging letters than I have received in contributions. My acquaintances are all suddenly poverty stricken."

The additional amount of sixty dollars to the credit of Alpha Gamma that week was contributed in small sums in response to the numerous "begging" letters which the girls were showering on all their friends whom they deemed legitimate prey.

The spirit of the contest had taken such keen possession of the students, and the rivalry had become so strong, albeit friendly, that the original purpose of the entire affair, that of being an aid to the college, became a secondary matter. The object seemed to be the first to report to the president of the board of trustees although, of course, none of the contestants except the Weekly management, or, in other words, M. Gussie, was anywhere near the point of reporting. Her nearness made her late act of unselfishness more impressive.

"I think every one ought to know about that two hundred," Erma broke out as the girls arose from the table.

"Let the Bees alone for telling!" exclaimed Clara Pike. "We needn't worry. I wonder that every one on the Hill doesn't know it now."

Janet appeared in the library doorway. "Miss

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Lowe, there's some one at the 'phone to see you," she announced, and the old announcement, ever novel, brought a suppressed smile to the faces of her audience.

"Hello," Winifred greeted her unseen interviewer at the telephone.

"Well?" came the single word in response.

Winifred puckered her forehead. She did not recognize the voice. "Who is this?"

"One all forlorn, deserted and alone."

Winifred giggled. "Louise Wallace! What have you done to your voice?"

"It's rusted through lack of use. I told you I am alone—all, all alone."

"Where's Mrs. Sweet?"

"Visiting 'she that was Miny Bissel,' while he that 'is to be'—you know—is out of town!"

"Glad he is," was the heartless rejoinder. "He's gone to do a good work. Long may he prosper, and devoted may he always be——"

"To me—thanks," cut in the distant voice.

"To the college," ended Winifred. "I heard just now that he has gone to get money for the Deke scholarship. And, Louise, Mr. Carter has given us a check for two hundred."

To her surprise, Louise began to laugh immoderately, peal after peal of mirth coming over the wire.

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

"Thereby hangs a tale, Winifred, which I want to pour into your ears. Come down to-night, can't you? I want you to stay all night with me."

"Oh, my work," began Winifred, but Louise interrupted.

"I promise solemnly that you shall grind unhindered all the time you are here except while eating supper and breakfast. During those respites I shall give you something to think about—beside food."

"I shall come," decided Winifred, "but I can't get there before six o'clock, so do have supper all ready," and she hung up the receiver.

In the front parlor several girls were around Inez Bedell, the stewardess from the Bee Hive, who had just called. When Winifred appeared in the doorway, Inez was saying, her face beaming happily:

"Why, girls, we didn't know it ourselves until ten minutes ago. Then we saw it in the paper exactly as you did, and thought it a mistake of the printer. I flew to the 'phone and called her up and she made out to mumble that it wasn't a mistake, and rang off before I could get in another word. Now, isn't that just like M. Gussie?"

"Isn't she a dear?" demanded Erma enthu-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

siastically. "She's odd, but she's the most generous girl in this college."

"I think," said Inez decidedly, "that M. Gussie ought to be called not odd but individual. She's the most individual girl that I know."

The word touched a sympathetic chord in the girls' hearts already mellowed by Gussie's generosity.

"'Individual,'" repeated Erma thoughtfully. "'Individual.' That exactly describes her. The first edition of M. Gussie was certainly odd, but the second is individual," which remark quite accurately distinguished between M. Gussie's first and second years at Huntingdon.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lillian innocently. "I didn't envy Gussie one bit so long as she was just plain 'odd,' but now that she is individual—I wish I could earn individuality!"

Under cover of the laugh which followed, Winifred slipped up-stairs and hung out her "busy sign" in preparation for her trip to Louise Wallace's. "If I work hard now, perhaps I'll have to take only my trigonometry with me," she thought.

She was ready to start at five o'clock, just as the street lamps were piercing the early dusk.

"The streets are so well lighted all the way that I shall walk and save car-fare," she decided,

" I GOTTA HUSTLE "

hugging her trigonometry under her arm and plunging her hands into her muff.

As she turned down Third Avenue, she saw two familiar figures just ahead of her—Army Blue and Newsy, the latter carrying a depleted bundle of newspapers. The Hill was a profitable beat for Newsy. The students regarded him as a sort of college protégé and looked with disfavor on any other boy who attempted to intrude on his territory. He wore his new suit and overcoat and added thereto were new gloves and cap, at which Winifred looked questioninglly.

" Perhaps Landon is back of all that newness," she told herself. " I mean to ask him. I don't believe the boy earns enough to allow him to blossom out this way, and I'm sure his aunt doesn't."

His aunt bent over the wash-tub the greater part of the day.

Army Blue was swinging along in the independent way which Winifred admired. The boy never cringed to the world on which he was so dependent for a living. His blue coat was buttoned up close about his neck, leaving only the edge of a celluloid collar exposed to view. Mrs. Betts insisted that he was in danger of wearing that collar out by reason of excessive scrubbing.

" I be-lieve," she affirmed, " that he takes it off

A JUNIOR CO-ED

and washes it at the cellar faucet three times a day after he gets through with the fur-nace."

Mrs. Sweet was authority for the statement that he had but two handkerchiefs, washing out one each morning and leaving it stretched so smoothly on the window pane that it had every appearance of being pasted there, this process taking the place of the ironing it could not receive. She did not add that after its owner was well on his way to college she was accustomed to go up to his room surreptitiously, get the deserted article in question, and in the privacy of her kitchen, wash and boil it, smoothing it out again on the exact spot which had previously held it, thus deluding Army Blue into the belief that the water at Mrs. Sweet's had a peculiarly whitening effect on handkerchiefs.

But when Louise Wallace taxed Mrs. Sweet with her good deeds she frowned darkly and answered crossly, "Do ye suppose I'm goin' to have my front up-stairs window disgraced by handkerchiefs the color of a saffron bag?"

Winifred drew near the pair who were walking slowly, and slackened her own pace just behind them. As they passed beneath an arc light her keen eyes discovered the corner of a newspaper protruding above the celluloid collar. Her shoulders shrugged themselves in an involuntary protest which dislodged the trigonometry from its resting

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

place beneath her arm. It fell to the walk, and Army Blue, turning quickly, discovered her.

When they started on together, the book in the blue coat pocket and Newsy between them, Army Blue looked down on the little fellow with pleasant eyes.

"Miss Lowe, what do you think this sub-fresh-man has been telling me? That he may have time to take one year in college, but not four."

"I gotta hustle," explained Newsy doggedly, without looking up. "Four years is a nawful time to spend just a-learnin' things off'n books—I gotta git out 'n' hustle."

"But, Newsy," teased Winifred soberly, "Mr. Dansbury expects his future partner to be a college-bred man. What about that partnership?"

The boy's childish aim was to become, some day, the partner of Huntingdon's most successful business man, an ambition often gravely encouraged by that gentleman himself as he stopped to buy a paper "off'n" his favorite dispenser of the Evening News.

But Newsy, instead of responding joyfully as usual to the mention of the partnership, only hung his head, drew his sleeve across his nose and mumbled:

"'Tain't no ways likely he'll want me for a pard—now."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Why 'now,' Newsy?" asked Winifred. "What has happened now?"

They had arrived at a cross street and the child drew back abruptly. "I gotta to go down this way," he announced without answering. "I gotta hustle. It ain't often I take me time comin' down from the Hill as I done to-night." This tribute to Army Blue brought a smile to its recipient's face.

Then he looked thoughtfully after the child. "I've come to the conclusion that that little shaver is in trouble, but I can't find out just what. Perhaps I'm mistaken, but he doesn't act as he did when I first came."

"I've noticed the difference myself—and heard others speak of it, too. I wonder what the matter is. One day I questioned him about"—Winifred paused abruptly and ended with—"about something he brought into the kitchen up at the house, and his evasions perplexed me."

She felt unable to speak of Newsy's new wearing apparel in the face of the old blue coat, the celluloid collar and that piece of protruding newspaper. "I don't want to say anything which will lead Army Blue to think that I ever notice clothes," she thought.

Because she was older, and an upper classman, but more especially because she was sweet spirited and sympathetic, Winifred's friendly attitude

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

toward Army Blue had in it a touch of motherliness, unconscious on her part, which brought a response in the way of frequent confidences, one of which was forthcoming now.

"Miss Lowe," he began presently, "I have a prospect of work up at college with the janitor. Isn't that great luck? One of the fellows is going to leave—one of the fellows who help, you know, and I may be taken on in his place. I hope so," fervently, "then I can begin to work off my tuition right away—I told you, you remember, that the registrar took my note, finally?"

Winifred nodded.

"If I am taken on," Army Blue continued, "it will be in place of Howells, the chap who takes care of the offices. Tell you what, Miss Lowe!" The boy turned his straight earnest gaze on her. "You'll think it foolish, but—but I should rather have the offices to keep than any other part of the building—because the registrar took my note."

"I see," responded Winifred gently. "You mean the registrar's office would be kept so clean and neat that he would not recognize it."

Army Blue smiled. "I want to pay him back for taking my note, and that's the only way, at present, that I have of paying."

The boy never forgot a kindness, a fact which particularly exasperated Anne Sweet. "If he

A JUNIOR CO-ED

thinks I've done a thing extry for him," she had told Winifred, "down he must needs come a-kitin' and empty my ashes or do some other crazy work for me."

"Don't you think," Winifred asked now, "that you may take on too much work, and so break down? That doesn't pay. I made that mistake in my freshman year, and nearly gave out. I shouldn't like to see you doing the same thing."

"Yes, but I am very strong," Army Blue assured her eagerly. "I don't need the same amount of sleep and—and—full—that lots of other fellows have to have, and I have learned to manage in such a way that I don't have to spend as many hours in study—that is, study with my books before me, I mean."

"How do you manage?"

"Well, I pay attention, in the first place, in class. When I write notes, I know I shall not have time to go over 'em again, so I'm obliged to remember 'em from the writing, and, then, while I'm doing your cellar work, for instance, I think 'em over. Just before I start from home mornings I read my history and then make myself study it from memory all the way up to the Hill." There was a dogged emphasis on that word "make."

"You can do a lot of things, you know," he ended apologetically as they approached Mrs.

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

Sweet's, "if you are obliged to, and want 'em done very badly."

"Indeed I do know," responded Winifred fervently, looking up at the old wood-colored house where she had learned the meaning of so many "have to's" in her freshman year.

Louise Wallace was watching from the living-room window, and hastened to open the door ceremoniously for her guest.

"Here you be
Come to tea,
With apologies to the immortal Bill-ee.

Walk in." This she rattled off in one breath.

Then spying the trigonometry which Army Blue was carrying she sighed in mock relief. "Only one? Why, I was led to think that you would come accompanied by a circulating library."

Half an hour later, the two girls faced each other across a small tea table set with Mrs. Sweet's grandmother's dishes which the latter's mother in turn had brought over from Holland.

"Now tell me about Mr. Carter," Winifred demanded as soon as they were seated.

"Not until you have praised every blessed thing on this table."

Winifred cast her eyes over the substantial array of food. "All right," she returned promptly,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"I'll do the praising before I do the eating—it may be the safer way!"

Louise raised her hands dramatically. "Not so! You behold in these viands the finished product of a course in domestic science—plus a few side-tracks laid out by Cousin Anne! My worthy relative informs me that I shall be obliged to forget all the nonsense which I spent four years in learning if I expect to become a good house-keeper. She doesn't believe in higher education for girls. She says trigonometry isn't as useful as tarts, and playin' the pianner will never make good riz bread. Hence, domestic science. I intend to attend cooking school up to the hour of the ceremony, and I hope my knowledge will prove so useful that Ashley won't be sorry that he didn't postpone that hour indefinitely."

"This bread has 'riz' light as a feather," commented Winifred, at last, "and your creamed potatoes are above reproach. Now, proceed with Mr. Moses Carter."

"Poor Moses!" laughed Louise. "He is torn by doubts and beset with hopes, Mrs. Betts being the source of both. He tells Cousin Anne that he can't sleep o' nights, and ain't runnin' his four hundred acres as they ought to be run."

Winifred choked on a piece of lemon tart.

"He came the other day to counsel with Cousin

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

Anne," Louise continued. "He thought that perhaps she knows Sairy Mary's mind. He doesn't seem able to discover its contents for himself, and, I suppose, he thinks if he can find a good mind reader he'll employ her regardless of expense."

"Poor Moses," echoed Winifred. "What does he feed his hopes on?"

"Oh, very scanty encouragement, I take it! Mrs. Betts admits him semi-amiably to your kitchen, where formerly she wouldn't have him around, to quote from her own concise language. But Moses doesn't know whether she is tolerating him for himself or his bank account. That's what he is trying to find out."

"His bank account," repeated Winifred. "I don't believe Mrs. Betts has a mercenary hair in ——"

"Not for herself," Louise interrupted, "but for the Alpha Gamma sorority. He says he thinks them pesky girls are holding him up for a scholarship through Mrs. Betts. He says she has never been so pleasant to him before in her life, but she won't talk about a blamed thing except that scholarship and how hard you girls are trying to raise it and how she wishes she had the money to help, and that she should think any one who had money would give it to them sooner than to any one else."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Now I know," chuckled Winifred, "how the check came. Bless Mrs. Betts!"

"Mr. Carter wouldn't agree with you on the cause of that blessing. He can't, it seems, get in a word edgewise on the vitally important subject of her future residence at Cartersville. And he thinks that now there is a remote possibility that Sairy Mary would harken to sense—which, in this case, means residence in Cartersville—if only he could find an opportunity to talk sense."

"I believe," cried Winifred, "that she will finally marry him."

"Alas!" sighed Louise. "In that case Sairy Mary will never adorn my own hearthstone—but, by the way, I have not told you quite all. Speaking of hearthstones reminds me that Sairy Mary's objection to Cartersville is Moses' numerous hearthstones. Cousin Anne thinks Sairy would have married him instead of the deceased Mr. Betts if Moses had consented to move out of that stone wilderness that he misnames a home. Sairy Mary loves sunlight and coziness and good cheer better, Cousin Anne thinks, than she ever loved a man. On the other hand Moses Carter is wedded to the home of his forefathers. He is absurdly proud of that curious old house. It has been more the apple of his eye than his four hundred acres and his blooded stock. No," with conviction, "when

"I GOTTA HUSTLE"

I think of that house, I still believe I shall welcome Sairy Mary to my kitchen."

"How much the girls will enjoy all this, when I tell 'em." Winifred sighed in pure enjoyment, as she finished a very palatable chocolate cake.

"But," cried Louise unexpectedly, "you have been recommended as one able to hold her tongue under all circumstances."

"What?"

"Yes, Moses asked Cousin Anne mysteriously if she knew any of those pesky girls, or supposed there was one amongst 'em, who could keep her mouth shut. Cousin Anne named you with promptness and dispatch. What lay back of the question only Moses Carter knows. He may appeal to you to do the mind reading act!"

CHAPTER IX

AN INTERVIEW

Mrs. Bois and Mrs. Willow, two of the younger alumnae living in the city, sat on chairs in Adelaide Prell's room. All the girls who chanced to be in the house at the time occupied the floor.

"Then you have made no plans for entertaining during the winter?" This from Mrs. Willow was an assertion rather than a question, and her tone was weighted with disapproval. "You ought to begin with a small party before the end of November."

"Just as a starter?" asked Lillian sweetly.

"How can we afford it?" questioned Clara Pike energetically. "I have given my party dress to the scholarship fund, and should have nothing to wear."

"And," quoth the other Twister plaintively, "I have also given to the aforementioned cause all I can spare for months."

"And I," echoed half a dozen voices.

"But it has been customary," insisted Mrs. Bois—and with Mrs. Bois custom was law—"for Alpha

AN INTERVIEW

Gamma to give a party of some sort on Thanksgiving evening, and here you have not even thought of one. We came up to-day for the purpose of making you think."

"But how can we make plans about so many things and do our work—our college work?" insisted Clara.

Mrs. Bois brought her lips together firmly. "We did, and when we were in college we had not the alumnæ back of us that you have. We had to do without the help that you receive."

Clara promptly and modestly retired from the field of argument.

"Besides," added Mrs. Willow, "Mr. Carter's donations have put us to the front with the scholarship, excepting, of course, Miss Barker, saving you—and all of us—from immediate worry."

"Who is this Mr. Carter?" Mrs. Bois digressed from the subject in hand to ask. "I have never heard of him."

Lillian answered promptly: "He's the owner of four hundred acres, and seven hired men and a perfectly dear house that I'd rather die than live in, and some trotters and hens and a terrible thunderous door-bell and"—here she was obliged to raise her voice—"and a bootjack and a check-book."

After the restoration of order followed by more lucid explanations, Mrs. Willow exclaimed:

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Of course I know who he is when I gather my wits together. Our milk bottles are stamped 'Moses Carter.'"

"He has a hundred of the best cows in the country," added Adelaide, "if he 'does say it as shouldn't.'"

At this point Mrs. Bois brought her auditors back to the subject of parties.

"You girls must see to it that Alpha Gamma keeps to the front socially. It always has led, and the alumnæ look to the active chapter to sustain our leadership."

"What would you suggest that we do?" asked Adelaide meekly.

Before Mrs. Willow could reply, there was a tap at the door, and Janet's voice telling Winifred some one was at the 'phone.

The lower rooms were deserted when Winifred picked up the receiver. An unnatural silence reigned, allowing a voice but faintly familiar to sound clearly in her ear.

"Hello! Is this Miss Lowe?" The words came with much hesitation and clearing of a masculine throat.

"It is. And to whom am I speaking, please?"

"To—er—now, Miss Lowe, see here! Are you alone?"

"Yes," answered Winifred in surprise.

AN INTERVIEW

"Nobody in gunshot of that end of the telephone?"

"No."

"Ain't no parties from the kitchen likely to overhear you, eh?"

"No." Then in a burst of enlightenment she cried: "Mr. Carter!"

"Sh-h, not s' loud. I ain't a bit deaf, and maybe your 'phone is next the kitchen. Is it? If 'tis, answer blind."

"But there's no need of any secrecy. The kitchen is not within speaking distance, and the rooms down here are entirely empty. That's something which doesn't happen often."

"Clear sailin', is it? Well, that's the first streak of good luck I've had in a dog's age." Mr. Carter's voice gained in strength as his fears were allayed. "Now, another thing. Will you promise that no parties in your house shall know that you've talked with me?"

"I promise," returned Winifred solemnly, bearing in mind her conversation with Louise.

"All right. Now, see here, I've got to talk with you."

"Very well. Go on, I have plenty of time ——"

"I don't mean over the 'phone," interrupted Mr. Carter hastily. "I mean face t' face—are you alone yet?"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred stifled her laughter. "All alone."

"Well, say! I want you to come out here. I want t' see you."

"Out to your home, do you mean?"

"Yes, out here—you. Don't bring along that girl that don't know a blame thing about business, nor that other one that has her backbone tied to a ramrod."

Here Winifred succumbed to her emotions, and her merry laugh rang over the wire unrestrainedly, at once arousing her interlocutor's suspicions.

"Other parties with you now, eh? Did they hear?"

"No, I'm alone still. I was laughing at your description of my friends. But why not say what you have to say now?"

"Can't. I must say it face t' face. When can you come out?"

"It's a long way out to Cartersville ——" Winifred began decidedly when she was interrupted by a—

"S-s-s. Don't say that word or any other that'd give me away. Parties might be listenin' and you not know it."

She accepted the correction and choked down her laughter with difficulty. "Very well, I'll remember. But—it's impossible for me to go out there. I prefer to have you come here."

AN INTERVIEW

"Not much!" Mr. Carter's voice expressed his consternation. "Not much; I don't see you there! Parties would know it and wonder what I was there for and worm it out of you. Oh, I know her!"

His sudden change to the pronoun nearly mastered Winifred's outward gravity again. She stood looking out of the window a moment, the receiver at her ear, and thought, while Mr. Carter cleared his throat impatiently.

"Then I'll meet you at Mrs. Sweet's."

"No, you won't!" came back swiftly. "Wouldn't go there for a farm. Anne'd get it out of you. I know her!"

Winifred thought again. "I have it now, Mr. ——"

"S-s-s, no names. Alone yet, are ye?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Then let's have it."

"I will talk with you at Mrs. Barker's, on Fourth Avenue."

"Another woman," suspiciously. "She'll try to get it out of you, won't she?"

"Mrs. Barker is so deaf she can hear nothing without the use of an ear-trumpet, and ——"

"The very place!" interrupted Mr. Carter joyfully. "What do you say to to-morrow afternoon?"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred considered. "Yes, to-morrow at three o'clock."

"Hold on a minute." Moses' nervousness was returning. "Any connection with parties at your house has this Mrs.—Mrs. Parker——"

"Mrs. Barker," corrected Winifred. "Not the least connection."

"Three o'clock to-morrow then it is, and—— There ain't no one listenin' now?" anxiously.

"No one," returned Winifred in a gale of amusement.

"Good-bye, then," came in a final burst of relief, and Winifred found herself released from a conversation which filled her not only with amusement but curiosity.

What could it be that Mr. Carter was so anxious that no one should "get out of her"? Perhaps he was going to ask her, as Louise had suggested, that she read Mrs. Betts' mind for him.

"Isn't this rich!" she exclaimed aloud, feeling, however, that half the "richness" was spoiled because she could not share it with the others.

"The thing to do now," she decided, pinning on her hat, "is to find Gussie and ask her if I may meet a 'gentleman friend' clandestinely at her aunt's—what a lark!"

According to the class schedule M. Gussie was at that hour sunning herself in the light of liter-

AN INTERVIEW

ary knowledge which emanated three times a week from the well-filled storehouse of Professor Hershal's brain. The study of literature was to M. Gussie a "joy forever."

When Winifred reached the door of Professor Hershal's class room, the hour was not yet ended, and she tucked herself into a corner on the broad sill of a hall window to wait. She had not been there many minutes before the janitor came slowly up the stairs talking to a young man in a long gray overcoat and gray cap.

"In about two weeks, probably, he'll leave," the janitor was saying, "and then we'll want you."

"I'll be right on the job," returned a familiar voice heartily, as its owner, turning away from the janitor, faced Winifred.

And Winifred was so surprised at the gray-coated figure that she blurted out without a trace of her usual tact, "I really didn't know you!"

Army Blue flushed, but, squaring his broad shoulders, threw back his square head, and replied quietly, "I don't wonder, Miss Lowe. I hardly recognize myself in this coat."

Winifred glanced at it in confusion. "I—that is—I didn't mean to notice—it's very becoming."

At the sight of her embarrassment the boy's lessened. "I want to tell you about it, Miss Lowe,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

for you will understand." There was an emphasis on the "you."

Winifred gave a gesture of dissent. "Please don't—unless you wish to," she said gently. "I didn't intend to appear impertinent."

"It was not you, but myself," Army Blue explained quickly. "I—I am self-conscious in these things." He indicated the cap and coat with one gesture, repeating, "I want to tell you."

He came nearer, but Winifred detected no rustle of enveloping newspapers.

"Bless the Stearnses!" she thought fervently.

"I think you will understand," began Sayles Cooper haltingly. "Although I want an overcoat—and need one," doggedly, "I feel that after all I've no right to be wearing this."

"'No right'?" repeated Winifred inquiringly.

"No, because I didn't pay for it," and again the boy's head came up proudly.

"Neither did I pay for this hat," was the swift retort, "but I was glad to get it, and I wear it most comfortably."

The unexpectedness of the reply, and the girl's matter-of-fact manner, robbed Army Blue of half his sensitiveness. His tense face relaxed as his glance focussed on the pretty head-covering in question.

Winifred, noticing the effect of her speech, added

AN INTERVIEW

energetically, "I couldn't have afforded a new hat this winter, and every girl down at the house knows it. They know that this was a gift and," she gave a little chuckle, "they mourn periodically because no one gives hats to them."

The boy's face relaxed to the extent of a smile. "That's a different matter, of course; but it does a fellow a lot of good to know it, just the same!"

Then he looked away an instant, silently. "Tell you what, Miss Lowe," he confessed in a low tone, "I want to persuade myself to—to accept this coat and wear it if I can feel—feel independent—I'll tell you how it came," he ended brusquely.

Winifred settled herself more comfortably on the window sill.

"It came last night. When I got home I found a big express package in the hall, and in it were a lot of things—this coat and cap, a full suit of black ——"

"That's good news!" interjected Winifred heartily.

Again a flush mounted the boy's cheeks. "Yes, a suit and—and some other things."

Her glance at once rested on his collar. It was not celluloid.

"The package came from Pittsburg," he continued. "It was prepaid, and not a sign of a name anywhere on it."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred laughed suddenly, a delighted little gurgle. She clapped her hands softly. "Goody!" she murmured. "You've got to keep the things, for the simple reason that you can't return 'em!"

Army Blue smiled again, but his voice was still freighted with uncertainty as he said slowly:

"But I think I can find who the sender was by looking——" He hesitated and did not finish the sentence. "It seems to me some one here must have caused that package to be sent. So—if I conclude to return it——"

Winifred's heart gave a thump of alarm over the first clause in this speech, but the last she interrupted with simulated indignation.

"Send it back, indeed! What awfully bad manners that would be, and how you would mortify and hurt the giver!"

Army Blue stared at her in surprise. He had not looked at the matter in that light.

"Now, see here!" Winifred slipped off the window seat and stood upright assuming her "Aunt Winnie air," as Landon rebelliously named it. "If I refused to receive favors I couldn't stay in college. This dress, for instance, was given me. Some one wore it a whole year and then passed it on to me, and I made it over and shall wear it a year longer. I didn't send it back; and I know where it came from, too!"

AN INTERVIEW

She omitted to mention that the donor was her only sister, Isobel. She felt that too many explanations might spoil the impression she was evidently making.

Army Blue glanced from the hat to the dress and drew a long sigh of relief. "Maybe I have a lot of useless false pride—Mrs. Betts says I have—for I—I need the overcoat."

"And the suit, too," added Winifred quickly. "You put your false pride in one of its pockets and wear that suit!"

This command brought a brief chuckle as the boy turned away, leaving Winifred so anxious to see Landon Stearns that she felt she must hunt him up, if he did not appear, in order to put a question to him.

At the head of the stairs Army Blue met Lillian, her sweet face aglow beneath her fur cap, and her big muff held coquettishly against one pink ear. Lillian's coquetry was as natural to her as red cheeks.

She smiled up gayly at Cooper with apparent blindness for his change of costume, and the boy responded with a pleasure which made his square face handsome and his eyes magnetic, a response which only Lillian had power to draw. A moment they talked together, Lillian all laughter and animation, Army Blue hanging on her least

A JUNIOR CO-ED

word. But the moment the gong rang, calling the boy to class, she hastened to Winifred with more speed than dignity, and seizing her arm, whispered breathlessly:

"Winifred Lowe, do you see his new coat? Doesn't he look distinguished in it? And the very idea of its being gray, just as we had him all named Army Blue! I don't like that one bit, do you? Still, there are his blue clothes, just the same, under the overcoat, so that makes—why, Winifred Lowe, do you realize what it means?" Lillian actually paused for a reply.

Winifred laughed and shook her head. "What?"

"Why, the union of the North and South. He's either Army Blue or Army Gray—— There goes Polly Dickerman, and I want to see her the worst way!"

In a flash Lillian was off, nearly colliding with M. Gussie Barker at the head of the stairs.

Winifred saw M. Gussie, but deliberately neglected to accost her. She waited in her window corner until Landon Stearns appeared, note-book in hand.

"Landon," she greeted him unceremoniously, "do you appear anywhere on the college records as coming from Pittsburg?"

"From Pittsburg?" he echoed, thrusting his

AN INTERVIEW

free hand into his pocket. "No," promptly. "I always sign South Berns," naming a small residential suburb of Pittsburg. The elder Stearns, an "iron man," had his office in the city and "commuted."

Winifred drew a breath of relief. "You are safe, then."

"Why safe?" questioned Landon. "Is this a case of coffee and pistols for two?"

"I was afraid," Winifred explained, "that you had given your address at your father's office, and Army Blue would find it out and suspect you."

She explained her meaning briefly.

"Oh, shucks!" fumed Landon uncomfortably. "What does he want to go nosing around like that for? Why can't he take the duds and wear 'em and keep cool?"

"Keep warm, I should say!" amended Winifred.

Landon laughed. "Either way you please. Your term refers to the outer, and mine to the inner man. I do wish he'd stand up under that garment calamity like a hero and keep still about it."

Winifred laughed mischievously. She knew that Landon was in a "blue funk" of fear that Army Blue would find him out. "I don't think he'll talk about it," she said. "That isn't his way. He tells me things some ——"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"I notice he does," muttered Landon, kicking at an apple core dropped by a careless student.

"—— but he's not at all confidential," Winifred finished calmly.

Ten minutes later she was on her way to the chapter house, armed with permission from M. Gussie to receive Mr. Moses Carter in the home of Mrs. Hannah Barker on Fourth Avenue. She had won permission without being obliged to give many reasons.

"I'll explain to auntie," M. Gussie told her good-naturedly, "and tell her to keep out of sight—needless to add 'hearing' to auntie, I am sorry to say."

As a result of M. Gussie's instructions, the following afternoon, ten minutes before the appointed time, Mrs. Barker's maid admitted Winifred and left her alone in the spacious library looking out on Fourth Avenue.

Winifred sat down in front of the window and watched eagerly for the appearance of Mr. Carter. She had not long to wait. As the clock was striking three, he came dashing along the street, the horses' hoofs pounding the pavement in a frantic haste, the driver sitting braced forward in his shining vehicle, his arms outstretched and the reins taut as though his high-spirited steeds were on the point of running away. The whip was

AN INTERVIEW

suspended above their glossy backs ready for a dextrous descent should the trotters fail to exhibit the proper mettle. In front of the house, with a final flourish of the whip which caused the animals to stand on their hind feet and paw the air, Moses handed the reins over to the man beside him, got himself and his huge fur coat out of the buggy and up to the door.

"Is Miss Lowe here?" he asked the maid in a voice which filled the hall. "She's one of the college girls that I've got to talk with here, because I don't want——"

Here Winifred prudently presented herself at the library door, not knowing how full an explanation he might feel called upon to make.

"Why, here she is now," he boomed. "Glad to see ye. How's yourself, and how's all the other parties up to your house?"

While Winifred was answering, Mr. Carter, to assure her—and himself—that he was thoroughly at ease and unafraid of the subject he had come to talk over, threw his coat on the piano, cast his fur cap on the davenport, and thrust the hands of his fur gloves into his pockets, one on either side, leaving the big wrist pieces protruding.

This accomplished, he paused at the old davenport and looked it over with a speculative eye.

"This Mrs. Barker has a proper eye in her

A JUNIOR CO-ED

head," he approved. "I wish to goodness all wimmen had, but they hain't!"

He looked the davenport over more carefully, shaking the arms to see if they were solid, and pressing the springs down to appraise their strength.

"Not quite as old or good as the one I have in my other room——" He broke off to blow a mighty blast on a red silk handkerchief and to ask: "Was you girls over in my other room?"

Winifred merely shook her head, and drew down the corners of her mouth firmly. She had come prepared to exercise self-control, foreseeing that the exercise would not be an easy task.

"It opens right out of the room you was in," explained Moses, finally settling himself down in an armchair. "It's the best room. Was mother's best, and grandmother's before her. I wouldn't have the room changed for a farm—no-sir-ee, not for a farm!"

To emphasize his declaration, Mr. Carter smote the arm of his chair a mighty blow, and the velour covering emitted a small cloud of dust, at which he looked in amazement.

"Guess Mrs. Barker better change hired girls," was his conclusion, "if a little tap like that can raise a sand-storm out of her furniture."

Winifred laughed until the tears came, and while she was wiping her eyes, her caller leaned over and

AN INTERVIEW

flicked the dust from his patent leather shoes with the red handkerchief, at the same time directing her attention adroitly to his prancing horses being speeded up and down the street. Each time they passed the window his cherubic face glowed with pride.

"Ever see the equal of them critters?" he asked. "It ain't often you see trotters of their build and blood on the streets of this little old town, although I do say it as shouldn't! And you ought t' see another pair o' colts I'm breakin'—and that's trying to break me," he added with twinkling eyes. "Don't know which of us is coming out ahead."

Finally, in his own time and after his own method, Mr. Carter moved away from the subject of horses, and felt his way toward the subject which evidently flowed through his mind continually as an undercurrent.

"How you gettin' along with that scholarship?" he asked—but the query was only distantly connected with the undercurrent.

"Very nicely indeed," rejoined Winifred cordially, "so long as Mr. Carter's check-book is at our disposal—otherwise, the money comes slowly in dribblets."

"Huh-huh." Mr. Carter leaned over and admired his small, well-shod feet a moment. "Huh-huh," he repeated, sticking out one foot and looking

A JUNIOR CO-ED

with comical anxiety at a spot where the shining surface of the leather had been slightly scraped.

Suddenly he raised his head, tucked his feet under the chair, and from the garrulous, likeable admirer of his own possessions, he became the keen winner of those possessions. Above a tie of red speckled with green, his round red face seemed to contract and sharpen.

"How much is left to raise?"

"About thirteen hundred dollars," Winifred made answer. "And we are all hoping that you will come to our rescue again soon. Won't you?" boldly.

"It depends." Moses' loud bluff voice underwent the same sharpening process which seemed to affect his face. He paused a moment looking hard at Winifred and then added: "It depends on whether you'll pay me back."

She sat up dismayed. "Pay you back? Why, Mr. Carter, we can't pay you back. We don't want to borrow the money. Surely you understood ——"

"Don't blow your hat off," advised Mr. Carter kindly. "I don't mean a money payin'-back. I mean—something else."

He bade fair to lapse from his business manner as he opened the way for the undercurrent of his thoughts to overflow and become visible.

AN INTERVIEW

"What do you mean?" asked Winifred directly.

Mr. Carter did not choose to answer directly. " 'Twouldn't come amiss to you girls t' have the hull thirteen hundred turned loose on ye at once, would it?" he asked craftily.

Winifred nearly oversat the edge of her chair. "Amis!" excitedly. "Will you give——"

"That depends on you," cut in Mr. Carter, tucking his feet still further under his chair.

"Tell me how it does."

"I believe," Moses began ruefully, but in sudden candor, "that it'll be drawed out of me finally by littles, but if you'll do me a favor, I'll give you the hull thing at once, and have it done with."

"Name your price," exclaimed Winifred with an excited laugh. "What favor can we do you?"

Moses scowled. "I didn't say 'we' but you," he corrected her. "I don't want them girls that come with you over t' Cartersville mixed up in it."

"Oh!" Winifred's enthusiasm cooled a bit. She looked at him dubiously a moment, and then, again recalling her conversation with Louise, she smiled broadly, asking with assurance, "What is it that you want?"

Mr. Carter drew a long breath. He had "beat around the bush" as long as he was able, but the final plunge looked icy to him.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

she wouldn't smell no rat if you should fix up some excuse. Get 'er there and I'll give you my check for thirteen hundred. I'll give you your head in the business. Just get Sairy Mary over there, and there won't be no questions asked as to how you done it!"

CHAPTER X

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

WINIFRED was guilty of lying awake half the night after her interview with Mr. Carter. In vain she devised ways and means of getting Mrs. Betts to Cartersville, and the surprise awaiting her there.

At every turn her ideas were met and defeated by Moses' caution, oft repeated, "Don't let Sairy Mary smell a rat, or you can't budge 'er with all the king's oxen!"

This, being interpreted, meant that if Sairy Mary suspected that Mr. Carter was connected with Winifred's plans she would not "budge" a step in the direction of the surprise.

The reason for her going, according to Mr. Carter, must be not only plausible, but urgent also, and daylight found Winifred without the required reason.

As yet she had said nothing about the matter to any one, although she had told Mr. Carter that it would probably be necessary to take others into

A JUNIOR CO-ED

her confidence. To this declaration he had given a reluctant assent :

"G'on and get 'er there any way you can, and I won't bother you with no questions. It's easier to run four hundred acres and seven hired men than one woman that's sot in her ways, and I never seen any yet that wa'n't sot !"

Then he added ruminatingly, "If she comes she'll see something that I bet will make a difference with 'er." But he entered on no explanation as to the nature of that difference.

"Winifred Lowe," demanded Lillian at the breakfast table, "what ails your eyes? Haven't you slept?"

"I certainly have."

Lillian was satisfied, but Erma Cunningham nodded sagely, observing:

"You notice, Lillian, that she doesn't say when nor how long. An hour some time last week would satisfy the conditions of your question."

"I didn't notice," sighed the heedless Lillian, adding, "Sometimes I wish I were brighter, and then, again, I'm sorry that I'm as bright as I am !"

"Describe one of the latter occasions," suggested Rebecca Bicknell.

Lillian's reply was prompt and unexpected.

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

"Times when you eat the bottom layer of chocolate in my box and fill up the space with tinsel."

Fortunately for Winifred it was Saturday and she had no recitations. Otherwise the faculty would not have found her mood receptive to the higher education. Her mind was open to but one idea and that was not forthcoming.

She lingered in the kitchen after breakfast talking over with Mrs. Betts the supplies for the ensuing week. She petted Pete and teased Druisy, trying in vain to find a clue to the idea in Mrs. Betts' conversation. But as that lady was absorbed by the subject of mince pies, her conversation held no clues.

Finally, Winifred shut herself in her room and sat down with idle hands beside the window overlooking Fourth Avenue. At the head of the avenue students were collecting awaiting a car. They were going with the football team to Ithaca and a hoped-for victory over Cornell. Bubbling over with life and enthusiasm, full of anticipation, they streamed up the avenue and down College Road, and across the campus from the boarding-houses on the other side.

Finally, around the corner, half a mile away, appeared the cars, four in number, specials ordered by the Athletic Association. And as they came

A JUNIOR CO-ED

sliding down the grade, the sons of Huntingdon,
massed on the tracks, sang lustily :

“ Hip-hip-hooray, boys,
Cheer for the team !
The line's a dream
With ends supreme,
Full, quarters and halves
Will fight to redeem.
Keep clean the flag of Huntingdon,
They tip the scales at just a ton.
Oh, can't they run !
Each mother's son !
Fighting for fame
Of alma mater's name,
Victory and honor for aye.”

With the last word there ensued a wild scramble for the waiting cars that, with brakes set, were soon shrieking and rumbling down the avenue toward the railway station.

Then, and not till then, did Winifred become aware that her door was open a crack, and Louise Wallace's voice was asking softly :

“ Here, dear, or elsewhere, fair ? ”

She sprang to her feet in a burst of relief. Who was more competent than Louise to give advice ? “ Come in this minute ! ” she cried enthusiastically. “ I want you to be a source of inspiration.”

“ Do you ? ” Louise came inside, closed the door, and backing up against it fanned herself with her

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

muff. "My, but I am hot. I ran two blocks to catch a car!"

She threw off her coat and sank into the big chair. "I have observed, my friend," she began gravely, "that a woman running for a car is not a sight to charm the onlookers. There is a striking lack of repose and dignity in her manner which she cannot conceal. Cousin Anne says that, when she was young, girls never ran for cars, but I took pains to point out to my respected relative that, in her girlhood, there were no cars here to run for!"

Winifred laughed. "Poor Mrs. Sweet! She comforts herself with the fact that you don't 'take after' her side of the house."

"She says that at times when I'm around she needs more comfort than Job and receives less! But"—Louise broke off abruptly—"what about that desired inspiration?"

Leaving her seat beside the window, Winifred turned the key in the door, closed the transom, and drawing a low stool to her guest's side, snuggled against her comfortably and related, amid much suppressed laughter, her interview with Mr. Carter.

"Alas for the havoc which she that was a Davis has power to work with hearts!" murmured Louise at the end of the recital. "What can that

A JUNIOR CO-ED

surprise be? Perhaps Moses has given up his colonial home and moved into one of his farm-houses."

Winifred shook her head. "I think not, by all that he said about the stone house. It seems to be the apple of his eye."

"One of the apples," corrected Louise. "The other is Sairy Mary—and no man knoweth which he holdeth a 'little dearer than his horse'—how does that run? I'm forgetting all I ever acquired in the halls of learning—to Cousin Anne's satisfaction!"

Winifred grasped her caller's arm firmly. "Please stick to the subject of how to get Sairy Mary over to Cartersville. Remember I look to you for inspiration. I have become a bankrupt in ideas."

"Appoint me receiver, won't you?" asked Louise mockingly. "You have enough left over to make that position worth while."

"No flattery allowed—only facts," dictated Winifred.

Louise looked out of the window smiling. "If you notice," she began presently, "Moses does not allow love to usurp business altogether. He realizes that he is fated to be pried loose from that thirteen hundred during the year, anyway, and he's bound to get his money's worth from Alpha

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

Gamma. Good old Moses! No wonder he's the rural captain of industry in this county."

"It doesn't look now," mourned Winifred, "as though he could get his money's worth. Can't you think, Louise?"

"Can't stop except when I sleep," she retorted. "I learned that in psychology and haven't forgotten it. If I hadn't seen it down in black and white, however, I should doubt it, at times, in my own case."

"Louise Wallace"—Winifred gave the arm she held a little shake—"stop your nonsense——"

"Can't. It's bred in the bone, Cousin Anne says."

"—— and help me out."

"The way out," Louise replied carelessly, "is to get up a party to go through Moses' barns, and make it necessary for Sairy Mary to chaperon you."

Winifred uttered a strangled cry, and sprang to her feet.

"Louise Wallace! The very thing—only ——"

Words failed her. She stood thinking so rapidly that Louise declared she could hear the mental wheels squeak as they went "round."

"You have given me the clue I've been chasing for twenty-four hours," cried Winifred excitedly. "But I must work it out a little further before I tell ——"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Louise arose and drew her coat on slowly. "That means that 'I must be goin'.'" She quoted Mrs. Sweet in a prim voice. Then, in her natural tones, she added, "I want to get out of the vicinity of those revolving wheels. I'm glad, however, that my receivership lasted long enough to prove you still solvent. When your plan is matured send an outline of it by special messenger, please—but be sure to prepay the messenger, as my funds are at a lower ebb than your ideas! Good-bye."

For half an hour after Louise left Winifred sat in her room planning. "I have never attempted anything so diplomatic as this," she finally muttered aloud, "but—I'm going to try. Aside from Mr. Carter's part I think it would be a lark for us."

Whereupon she stepped into the hall and called, "Girls, oh, girls!" to two rows of closed doors.

One after another the doors flew open with—

"Who are you?"

"Which way?"

"Is it anything important?"

Winifred answered the last. "Very important. Come down here, all of you, just a moment."

The conference was brief. Winifred stood in the middle of the floor and talked convincingly for two minutes. She did not allude to Mrs. Betts nor her conversations with Mr. Carter and Louise

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

Wallace. When she had finished every girl in her audience was applauding.

"No one in college except us three has ever been inside that old curiosity house," cried Lillian, "but I've told hundreds of the students about it, and they're wild to go!" Numbers meant nothing to Lillian.

"What fun it will be!" chimed in a chorus.

"If," added Rebecca, prudently, "Mr. Carter will let us come."

"Of course," cautioned Winifred, "it's all 'if' and 'if' yet. Now I shall go and call up Mrs. Bois and Mrs. Willow and find out if such an unheard-of thing meets their approval."

After due consideration Mrs. Bois and Mrs. Willow approved, in consideration of the fact that the party was to be very informal, anyway, and the girls would go well chaperoned, and Mr. Carter was a highly respected citizen. Mrs. Willow added, furthermore, with suggestive emphasis, that the *alumnæ* could always depend on the girls of the active chapter to maintain the dignity of the sorority.

Winifred's next move took her to the kitchen and Mrs. Betts.

Sairy Mary was engaged in the not altogether agreeable task of giving Pete a bath in a foot-tub. In payment for services rendered, Pete had marked

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the back of his mistress's hands with long red scratches, and was decorating her apron and the clean floor with quantities of his bath water.

"I won't have a dirty cat a-round me," gasped Mrs. Betts, "and Pete is bound I shan't have a clean one!"

She was endeavoring to hold the struggling animal under water with one hand while she scrubbed him with the other.

"You hold him and I'll wash him," suggested Winifred.

She took possession of the bar of soap, and, presently, an enraged and insulted Pete was soothed into damp slumber on a piece of carpet beside the stove, the floor was wiped up, and Mrs. Betts' wet apron laid aside.

"You are a han-dy sort of girl to have a-round on cat washing day," she commended, sinking exhausted into her rocker. "I al-ways wash Pete in the full of the moon so his hair won't come out. It's only once a month, but he acts as all-possessed as if I put 'im under water every day." She looked disapprovingly at her wet and forlorn pet beside the stove. "That's the way with some folks. Do some-thing to 'em that's for their own good and they'll scratch hard-er than's though you was benefit-tin' yourself."

Picking up a broad palm leaf fan which lay on

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

the table through all kinds of weather, Mrs. Betts began to fan herself vigorously, asking, "Now, what is it you come to say?"

"I came to ask your advice," began Winifred with an assumption of confidence she was far from feeling, "because you are so much better acquainted with Mr. Carter than I am."

Mrs. Betts nodded. She continued to fan herself calmly, but her eyes wandered from Winifred to Pete.

"You gave me such excellent advice about the scholarship," continued the girl adroitly, "that I have come after more. Do you think we dare ask him to let us give a Thanksgiving party in that quaint old house of his? Would he think we were asking too much?"

Mrs. Betts' gaze flew back to her questioner in amazement. "What possesses ye to think of such a thing as leavin' this pretty warm house and tak-ing a party into that old stone barn?" she cried, sitting upright with such vigor that her knob of hair slid over the crest of her head and hung dejectedly above her right eye.

"It would interest our guests just as it interested us," explained Winifred. "They have all seen this house, and they all want to see that."

"What any one can see in that un-civilized place to like is be-yond me!" scolded Mrs. Betts.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"As for me, you couldn't hire me to stay there a day. I never see a place I de-spise as I do that, and Moses he thinks it's the most mar-velous house that was ev-er built." She spoke as belligerently as though Mr. Carter were there to note her disapproval.

"But you see, Mrs. Betts, it's because the place is so curious—so 'un-civilized'—that it would be fun to have a party in those great rooms, with their immense fireplaces ——"

"And a heath-enish lack of furni-ture," cut in Mrs. Betts, in a disgusted tone.

"And wouldn't it be fun," pursued Winifred undaunted, "to wait until the company had all arrived and then, when no one expected it, ring that awful door-bell ——"

Mrs. Betts' face relaxed, although her tone was indignant. "I'd be asham-ed to have such a bell as that on a hen-coop, to say noth-ing of the place where I lived."

"But do you think," asked Winifred anxiously, "that Mr. Carter would take kindly to our idea?"

"Land, yes!" ejaculated Mrs. Betts, fanning herself vigorously. "If you praise up his place a little he'd let you go and tear it down over his head and be tickled to death to have ye!"

"So far so good," Winifred told herself as she left the kitchen. "I have interested Sairy Mary

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

in the scheme, and let her see that this is no pre-arranged movement between Mr. Carter and me. Now for interviewing that captain of industry."

She chose to telephone him from Mrs. Barker's lest the "party" in the kitchen—not to mention the girls—should overhear.

When, at last, central had secured his ear, the conversation between the owner of the old stone house and the diplomat at the other end of the line was a lengthy one.

"How you goin' to get certain parties out here that way?" was Mr. Carter's first demand.

His second, delivered after a lengthy explanation from Winifred, was: "Ain't she goin' to smell a rat?"

"The reason I'm working in such a roundabout manner is to prevent her from suspecting the existence of a rat."

"Go ahead, then," commanded Mr. Carter. "And now about that cater fellow——"

"Caterer," murmured Winifred.

"You can have 'im fetch out a mess of stuff if you want 'im to, but my hired girls can get up as good a supper as I want t' set my teeth into!"

"No," returned Winifred firmly. "If we have the party at your house we'll not put your hired girls to any trouble nor yourself to any expense—we shall have a caterer."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"All right," resignedly. "Do as ye please—you would anyhow, bein' a woman!"

An hour later Mrs. Betts met Winifred in the dining-room.

"What about that party?" she asked keenly interested. "Have you 'phoned Moses?"

"Indeed I have, Mrs. Betts." Winifred forced her enthusiasm. "He gave his consent as soon as I told him how wild the girls all are to get inside of his house."

"Huh!" retorted Mrs. Betts. "By the time they've froze their backs and roasted their faces in front of them out-rageously big fireplaces they'll be glad to get home. Fireplaces make up in blaze what they lack in heat. A stove no bigger than a mo-lasses jug can heat a room much bet-ter."

Winifred assented cheerfully, whereupon Mrs. Betts softened.

"But so long as you girls are bent on go-ing I'm glad you can go. They've most all been out in the kitchen a-talkin' about it."

Winifred smiled all the way up to Mrs. Munroe's room. "The girls couldn't have done a better thing," she thought, "but if I had told them the real object of the entire plan, it would be as difficult for them as for me to talk the matter over with her naturally."

There was one feature in the case, however,

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

which Winifred hugged comfortably to her heart. If her plan in regard to Mrs. Betts failed, but few people would be the wiser. The girls need not know how much hung in the balance. They would have their party, and, so far as they were concerned, everything would go as planned. Thus consoled, she rapped on the chaperon's door.

An hour later she descended the back stairs to the kitchen with a face the lugubriousness of which was not assumed as she was approaching the crucial point in her scheme.

She found Mrs. Betts making preparations for dinner. Two kettles were steaming on the back of the stove, the cook peeling potatoes in the sink close by where she could look into the kettles without taking an unnecessary step.

Winifred leaned against the end of the sink and regarded the potatoes mournfully.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Betts kindly. "You look as if you had lost your last friend. You don't look that way for com-mon."

Winifred sighed. "I don't feel so 'for common' either, Mrs. Betts, but that party business has had a setback, and I do hate to tell the girls because they have set their hearts on going."

Mrs. Betts held a large potato and a paring knife suspended in the air. "Has that man sent you word that you couldn't come?" Her tone was

A JUNIOR CO-ED

threatening. "If he has you just leave him to me!"

"Oh, no, it's not Mr. Carter." Winifred shook her head disconsolately. "It's Mrs. Munroe."

"Mrs. Munroe? What's she got to do with it?" The potato and knife made a gradual descent to the pan.

Winifred's guilt would not allow her to look Mrs. Betts in the face when she replied. Winifred was not an adept at deception.

"It's the chaperonage part, Mrs. Betts. Mrs. Munroe is so delicate, and she has a cold now—she catches 'em so easily—and those fireplaces, as you say, don't half warm the rooms—we can't ask her to chaperon us."

Here Winifred stopped in sheer confusion, remembering the length of time it had taken to persuade Mrs. Munroe to refuse her chaperonage.

But Mrs. Betts did not notice the confusion. She lifted the cover of the kettle nearest her and stirred its contents thoughtfully.

"She does look sort of pindling, I know. May-be one of your 'old girls,' as you call 'em, will go with you."

Winifred nodded. "They will be there in the evening, of course, several of them, but, you see, some of us must go to Cartersville in the afternoon to direct the caterer and—oh, do dozens of things!

AN AMATEUR DIPLOMAT

And we shall be obliged to take some of the boys with us to help, and that will mean that a chaperon will be necessary—or, at least, usual. Now, we can't ask any of the alumnæ to spend the day as well as the evening with us—they do too much for us as it is."

She waited a moment with her heart in her mouth, and then burst out with a "Mrs. Betts, please go with us in the afternoon, won't you? The girls will be broken-hearted if anything comes between us and a party in that queer old house. Oh, Mrs. Betts, please say you'll go."

Not for a moment did Sairy Mary "smell a rat." She glanced sympathetically at Winifred's misery-stricken face and thoughtfully peeled potatoes.

"Sort of a box you've got into," she commiserated.

"But you can pull us out of it so easily," pleaded Winifred.

Mrs. Betts chuckled until her knot of hair had traveled all over the top of her head. "'Twould look queer, wouldn't it, for your cook to be chapy-roon?"

Winifred tried to breathe naturally.

Mrs. Betts cut a large potato into halves, and dropping them into the pan said briskly, "Go on with your plans. I guess I can make out to stand half a day of chapy-roonin'."

CHAPTER XI

PREPARATIONS

THE Thanksgiving frolic was only ten days distant, and the Alpha Gamma Chapter House was the scene of much bustle. There were committees galore, and consultations galore, with everything, according to Punch, going as "merry as a wedding-knell."

The girls voted Mrs. Betts a "dear" to consent to chaperon the committee that was to have charge of Mr. Carter's abode Thanksgiving afternoon. They were entirely unsuspecting of Mrs. Munroe's real reason for withholding her chaperonage, Winifred not having yet taken any of them into her confidence.

The invitations, as became the informality of the occasion, were to be issued only a week before Thanksgiving. Every girl knew, or believed she knew, in advance who would be invited, so that when the active chapter met in the library to make out the list of guests they were not looking for any surprises.

It was the custom, general among the sororities, to give, during the year, one or more social affairs

PREPARATIONS

to which only as many of the college men were invited as there were girls in the sorority, and the manner of choosing the guests was an open secret. Each girl gave the name of some student to whom she was particularly indebted, or, if there was no one she cared to favor, a man was chosen whose friendship the sorority particularly wished. The invitations were then issued by the chapter as a whole.

Erma Cunningham was provided with paper and pencil for the list because it was possible to read Erma's writing.

Sitting down beside the table she began to scribble industriously.

"What's the use of going the rounds?" she asked as she wrote. "I can make out this list with my eyes shut and my hands tied behind me. There's Landon Stearns——" She paused and held up her pen. "Any objections? If so, speak now, or forever after hold your peace."

Winifred, sitting beside the hot-air register warming her hands, merely smiled and "held her peace."

Landon's name went on the list.

"Instructor Howard Rex Wright, Ph. D.," wrote Erma with a flourish, reading aloud as she wrote.

The color flushed Lillian's cheeks. "Who told you to put him down?"

"Nobody. I put him down to save you the

A JUNIOR CO-ED

trouble of a selection," returned Erma carelessly. "Of course you'll invite him," she added looking up. "He's a faculty member, and he has taken you out more——"

Lillian tossed her head. "That makes no difference," she returned. "He has invited me to places presumably because he wanted me to go, not that he might get a return invitation—and he won't get one from me this time."

Erma dropped her pen in sheer amazement, and every one sat up and looked at the flushed and resolute Lillian.

"Why—why——" stammered Winifred. "This is sort of a pay-back affair—who, Lillian——"

"I intend"—began Lillian, and when Lillian spoke in that tone every one understood that she was not to be turned from her purpose—"I intend to have Army Blue invited."

There was a long and dismayed pause. No one present had the least objection to Army Blue as an individual nor a guest. Huntingdon was a democratic place, and many a boy who worked for a living was a social favorite. But there was Instructor Johnson, who had stooped from the faculty heights to bestow his friendship on Alpha Gamma. Mr. Johnson must not be ignored.

"Lillian Antwerp, you've just got to invite him!" declared her roommate.

PREPARATIONS

"Army Blue," repeated Lillian serenely, but her serenity deceived no one.

"You owe him the invitation," emphatically from Adelaide Prell.

"Army Blue." Lillian's eyes were fixed steadily on the list.

"What shall we do with the instructor?" asked Rebecca.

Lillian made no reply.

Suddenly Erma, biting the end of her pen, wrote "Sayles Cooper" across the page with a flourish, read the name, and then looked up.

"Girls, let's invite the instructor, and then, to keep the number even, let's invite M. Gussie Barker." This from the girl who had most persistently opposed M. Gussie.

Winifred glanced up with sparkling eyes.

"That would be a most significant act," objected Marguerite Southy. "It would give every one the impression that we are rushing her."

"Rushing" was the term applied to all those attentions which were showered on a student by a 'Greek letter society—attentions which looked to a better acquaintance with the student in view of a possible invitation to join the society.

Erma punched holes with her pen in the list. "Gussie is doing such splendid work—and serving the college in such an unselfish way," she said

A JUNIOR CO-ED

jerkily, "that some sorority ought to be rushing her—in spite of her—individuality."

"I suppose you all know," interposed Clara Pike, "what she has gone and done this week."

"No—what?" chorused a dozen voices.

"Sent a big donation which was, of course, intended for herself, over to the little Thetas, and insists on their entering the race."

"Theta" was a Greek letter sorority which had planted a weak nursling in Huntingdon, a two-months-old chapter consisting as yet of only a dozen members. Theta had not felt equal to the attempt of establishing a scholarship.

"While M. Gussie is helping others all I'm thinking about is getting my ring back. She makes me ashamed of myself—almost," added Lillian, ever truthful concerning herself.

"I believe," said Winifred quietly, "that Gussie's common sense would prevent her from misunderstanding an invitation to our party—if the reasons were partly explained to her."

To Winifred, then, was presently entrusted the task of tendering the invitation, and the list was completed without further ado.

As Winifred, who was the last to leave the library, was going slowly up the stairs, she heard the telephone bell ring, and with a laugh, ran back to the library.

PREPARATIONS

"I almost know it is Mr. Carter," she told herself as she took down the receiver.

It was, and Mr. Carter was intent on asking a question which he had already asked three times within two days. It was not asked directly, that being contrary to his social policy.

"Who's within hearin' of this machine?" he began cautiously.

"No one except myself."

"Everything going well, is it?"

"Yes."

"Ahem-a-ah-ahem!" Mr. Carter cleared his throat with a noise which made the wire hum. "Now, about that corn huskin' for a prize. We can get the harness room het all right, and you say you're goin' to fetch along a boy or two to fix up the shocks and things——"

Winifred smothered a laugh. This was preparatory ground which Mr. Carter had trod three times before. She assured him that everything would be "fixed" correctly.

"Yes—ahem-m-m. No change up there in any one's mind, is they?"

"No change whatever."

"You ain't lookin' to have any parties back out of coming at the last minute, are ye?" This, at last, was the pivotal question.

Winifred chuckled. "No, I'm sure she won't

A JUNIOR CO-ED

back out. She's planning her work already so that Janet can get dinner easily that night."

"Is she?" The voice of the captain of industry was boyishly jubilant. "She always was fore-handed. That's one reason ——" here his voice trailed away into an indistinct mutter, broken by another series of "ahems" and then a hasty "Good-bye, then."

Smilingly Winifred climbed the stairs intending to go at once to Gussie's. But, as she ascended, Rebecca Bicknell was preparing to descend, followed by Lillian's voice, and the voice was mournful.

"I guess, Reb, you'd be blue as indigo too, if your diamond was in pawn ——"

"Haven't any," Rebecca threw over her shoulder. "Blessed be nothing!"

Lillian raised her voice. "——and if you had promised to pay monthly on it and hadn't paid a cent! Here six weeks have passed and I've got so I run past the registrar's door and dodge him in the halls."

"I'm glad," retorted Rebecca, "that there's one man of whom you stand in awe," and the outer door closed behind her.

Winifred continued down the hall and into Lillian's room. Dropping on the window seat she faced the "indigo blue" maiden sitting at her

PREPARATIONS

desk, the end of a pen held firmly in a wrinkle between her eyes.

"I'm going to tell you something," said Winifred, "which I shall tell all the girls just before Thanksgiving."

The pen dropped from Lillian's fingers. The wrinkle disappeared from her brow. "Is it something exciting?" she asked in a tone of the liveliest interest.

"You'll think so when you know that there is every prospect of your getting your ring back immediately after Thanksgiving, and ——"

But no words followed the "and." With a cry Lillian sprang to her feet. The pen flew under the couch-bed. Her writing paper was scattered as by a hurricane. The chair was overturned with a bang as she projected herself on her informant with a force and velocity which would have sent that informant through the window pane had she not been prepared for the onslaught.

"For pity sakes!" exclaimed a voice at the door, and Clara Pike's head appeared. "Is the earth quaking?"

"No," came in smothered tones from Winifred's arms, "I'm just reaching the point where I'm ceasing to quake!"

"Well, please reach it without moving the foundations of the house," invited Clara cordially,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

slamming the door. To an inquiring voice in the hall she answered, "Oh, Lillian has just made one of her record touch-downs!"

Lillian giggled softly. "Now tell me," she commanded, snuggling close to Winifred. "Make it a lovely story, and put in all the stage settings."

As Winifred told the "lovely story" Lillian punctuated it with exclamations both amused and ecstatic.

"The dear old bear!" she cried one moment, and "Isn't he horrid!" the next. "Mrs. Betts! I could hug——! And the ring and—— Why, Winifred, Alpha Gamma will have the first scholarship to report, miles and miles ahead of any one else——"

"Except Gussie," interposed Winifred.

Lillian sat back on her heels. "M-m—yes, except—except Gussie," she repeated. Then her thoughts reverted to the ring. "I wish," she said slowly, "that you'd go up and tell the registrar that——"

Winifred interrupted decidedly. "No, Lillian, we won't say anything to the registrar yet. When we get the money and have turned it all over to Mr. Willow"—Mr. Willow had been selected to invest the scholarship money—"I shall go and have a talk with him and find out just how we can use it to redeem your ring this year—before

PREPARATIONS

you go home at Christmas. Then it will be time to take the result to the registrar."

Lillian hugged her knees, and lifted adoring eyes to Winifred. "You are such a comfortable person to have around, Freddie. You do real thinking, while all I do is to shed a few scatter-brained ideas about."

Winifred arose, smiling ruefully. "It's a great trainer, Lillian, this having to think to make both ends in life meet."

Lillian smoothed the folds of a silk dressing gown thoughtfully. "I shall have to do that now myself," she sighed. "Will you teach me how?"

Then scrambling hastily to her feet she held out a box of chocolates. "Mamma sent 'em from Philadelphia. She's on her way to Florida. She usually goes to Palm Beach, but we're so poor this year that she's got to stop in some little place north of there, I can't remember where. It's dreadful to be so poor, isn't it, dear?"

Winifred accepted the candy, and left the room laughing at Lillian's ideas of dire poverty.

Just as she was finishing putting on her gloves, her door opened a crack and the nose of the poverty-stricken one appeared—and a very shapely nose it was too!

"Winifred, I've been thinking how awfully selfish it would be to report the scholarship first

A JUNIOR CO-ED

when there Gussie has been able to report it twice, and instead, has turned the contribution over to the Bees and to the Thetas. She should have the honor. We're not honestly entitled to it."

"Truth to tell, Lillian," confessed Winifred, "I had not thought of that. My mind has been chiefly on the redemption of your ring. Please don't tell me again that you don't think."

"I've just gone into training!" retorted Lillian with a smile like a burst of sunshine.

She went down the hall singing gayly :

" ' Oh, Huntingdon, through our college days,
Even to thee will we sing of thy praise.' "

A few moments later, when Winifred, in M. Gussie's study, had satisfactorily disposed of the subject of the Thanksgiving party, she introduced the matter of the scholarship, whereupon her hostess became obstinate.

"The Weekly management all act so about that scholarship that I'm right down provoked!"

Winifred opened her eyes widely. She had not heard of any unseemly actions on the part of the managers of the college Weekly. Landon was business manager.

"They all say," M. Gussie's voice was positively grumpy, "that the scholarship shall not be re-

PREPARATIONS

ported as having been raised by the Weekly—they say I shall take the credit of it myself, and that spoils all the fun. I shan't report any scholarship on those terms."

"You will!" contradicted Winifred. "And right away, too!"

M. Gussie set her full red lips obstinately together. Her long dark lashes fringed a pair of handsome dark eyes also emitting obstinacy.

"It's exactly like a lot of boys to go spoil a game in this way"—M. Gussie was the only girl on the Weekly—"it's not fair play——"

"It's the fairest of plays," contradicted Winifred again, "and I admire their spunk. A nice lot of boys they'd be to let a girl do all the work, and then divide the credit——"

"Shucks!" exclaimed Gussie brusquely, worrying a paper pad with the point of her fountain pen. "I can't take any credit for raising all that money. It's mother. The people who give don't know me from Adam—or Eve, rather!" with a laugh. "The only credit I can take is being wise enough to sign myself as my mother's daughter—that brings the cash."

"I don't know how you get it," said Winifred firmly, "but it comes, and I want you to finish up the Weekly scholarship before Thanksgiving and report it—because, Gussie, there is every prospect

A JUNIOR CO-ED

that the rest of the money for ours will come to us next week, and—and please hurry up and finish yours.”

Gussie leaned forward, her face lighting with a pleased smile. “Really, Winifred?” she demanded. “I am so glad. You shall have the credit of the first report—yes, listen to me. I’m only one to enjoy the distinction, while there’s twenty-seven of you, beside all your alumnæ. I’m so unattached”—Gussie’s tone was humorous, but Winifred detected an undertone which lacked humor—“that I’d have no one to rejoice with me, and so all the fun would be taken away. Why, even the rest of the Weekly board have deserted me, and I hate to stand alone—that is,” with guilty haste, “in a matter of this kind, where there’s no principle involved. No-sir-ee!” She ended her glib reasoning with a wave of her hand. “I shall not finish my scholarship and I shall write up Alpha Gamma in an editorial which will put you on top of the auditorium dome! I shall rejoice with those who do rejoice, and I’m awfully glad that you are among the rejoicers!”

Winifred had not interrupted the flow of Gussie’s logic. She had sat with lips which tightened resolutely at first and then gradually relaxed into a smile. At the last word she arose, hugged Gussie impulsively, and still smiling, but wordless,

PREPARATIONS

ran down-stairs. At the foot she turned and faced her hostess.

"All right, Gussie," she assented ambiguously, adding, "I am glad, however, you are not obstinate about coming to our party. Be sure you come early, too."

For two days after the invitations to that party had been issued, Lillian fairly hung over the little table beside the outer door where the postman placed the mail. Eagerly she opened all the replies which arrived, and, although they were all acceptances, her face unaccountably fell at the sight of each signature.

"Army Blue has not sent us a word," she whispered to Winifred, at the close of the second day, when the girls arose from the dinner table. Her voice held a hesitancy foreign to Lillian. "I—I'm afraid that he doesn't know he should send a reply, or else when he does reply it won't be properly put, and the girls will—but I shall not care, because there are better things in the world to know than the proper form to use in replying to an invitation," with a defiant nod.

"That's true," returned Winifred emphatically, "and Army Blue knows a lot of those things."

"But I thought," continued Lillian wisely, "that I should look out for it, and if his reply came and it were not—not in good form, that I

A JUNIOR CO-ED

would just take possession of it and not let a soul read it. Of course the girls would laugh at me, but I'd rather they laughed at me than at—at Army Blue."

Before Winifred could reply Janet appeared. "You're wanted in the kitchen, Miss Lowe," she announced, beginning to pick up the dishes.

As Winifred swung open the door leading into the butler's pantry she came on Sayles Cooper waiting for her. He had finished his dinner and had come to meet her in the pantry, the kitchen being occupied by Mrs. Betts and Newsy engaged in earnest conversation.

"Miss Lowe, I want to ask you something." The boy stood squarely in his worn shoes, and raised his eyes to hers with a look which had in it an element of bravery, but no flinching. "I ought to have asked yesterday, but—well, I had a time to make myself ask at all!" His color rose, but his eyes never wavered.

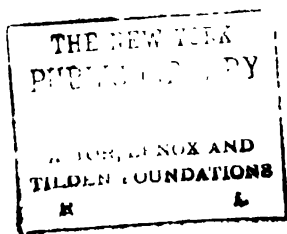
From his pocket he drew out an envelope, which Winifred at once recognized. "I have never received a written invitation to a party before," he confessed quietly, "and—well—the long and short of it is, I don't know how it ought to be—treated."

Winifred laughed sympathetically, but answered lightly: "With an acceptance, of course!"

Army Blue smiled. "Yes, I shall come. I



SHE PROBED FOR A SPLINTER



PREPARATIONS

have had no other thought,—but how shall I let you know that I am coming? You see I—I don't know how an acceptance ought to be worded—and there is none of the fellows that I care to ask. I—it seems more natural to ask you, even though you are one of the girls who have been"—he drew a long breath and glanced down at the envelope, "been so kind to ——"

"Ourselves," interrupted Winifred swiftly. "We are decidedly selfish in our invitations!" and the emphasis on that word selfish was very welcome to Army Blue.

Then, in a businesslike way, without more ado, she took the invitation and wrote the proper form of an acceptance on the back of it, and the recipient departed with a relieved expression on his square face.

"I'll not say anything, even to Lillian, about this," Winifred decided, as she paused to examine a leaking faucet. "Lillian will be pleased, despite her good resolutions, to have his acceptance appear in good form."

At this point the colloquy in the kitchen attracted her attention. Mrs. Betts sat in her rocker with Newsy's small grimy palm pinched tightly in her left hand while with the right she probed for a splinter.

"It's as big as a telegraph pole," sniffed Newsy.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Say! Guess I've got a cold in my head"—more snuffles as the needle broke through the cal-louses and penetrated the soft flesh—"my nose's been actin' like this all day." He drew a coat sleeve across the offending member. "I—ouch! It don't hurt none, only——"

Here the "telegraph pole" yielded to Mrs. Betts' deft pull, and before Newsy understood what was going on, he had lapsed again into the childhood which he had believed lay far in the past of his nine years of experience with life.

His arms were hugged tightly about Mrs. Betts' neck, his injured hand bleeding unheeded over her clean calico dress, his dirty little face held closely against hers while he sobbed out of a heart full of loneliness and neglect:

"You pick out—splinters jest like—like my mother uster."

And Winifred, standing in the pantry door, smiled even while the tears ran down her own cheeks, and Mrs. Betts said in a tender mother tone which no child had ever cultivated, "Bless you, dearie," the while straining the little fellow to a heart full of mother love unclaimed.

But Newsy's tears were short lived, and presently he was wiping his eyes on Mrs. Betts' handkerchief while he showed her the crêpe bands on his sleeves and boasted of their width, not forget-

PREPARATIONS

ting, however, to lean against the arm which still encircled him.

"They ain't many fellers that can show s' much black fer their folks," he bragged, measuring the crêpe with his fingers, "nor such good black neither. But that Mr. Stearns up there to the Psi Upsilon House, he's all right, he is! He give it to me."

The mention of the Psi Upsilon Chapter House seemed to recall Newsy to a sense of his duties, and caused him to draw away from the comforting arm and become a man again.

"Aw—how I'm wastin' my time!" he cried, briskly gathering up his load of papers. "I gotta hustle!" and away he sped beginning his familiar cry of "Pa-piers" just outside the door.

"If I had a home that I in-tended to live in," said Mrs. Betts to Winifred without turning her head, "I'd take that Newsy boy. But my place up on the Green Valley Road is too far away from neighbors for me to live e-ven with a boy."

Winifred, thinking of Moses Carter's great stone house, went up-stairs to her books.

She did not tell the girls about the prospective completion of the scholarship until the night before Thanksgiving, when every preparation for the following day had been completed. Then she gathered them into her room, closed the transom lest

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Janet might hear, and told them the story with, as Lillian had put it, all the stage settings.

Furthermore, when the commotion over the tale had somewhat subsided, she added an account of her interview with M. Gussie and the latter's generous logic as to the advantages of having a joy twenty-seven times intensified.

"I wish," exclaimed Punch emphatically, "that we were twenty-eight, as we might be, and that the twenty-eighth were M. Gussie Barker."

"There isn't another such a brilliant all-around girl in college," mused Adelaide Prell.

"And she is going to amount to something after she leaves college," chimed in Lillian, "which cannot be said of all of us. I think we'd better look out for that—the making of a 'glorious alumnae' such as our old girls are always talking about! I, for one, never can be glorious, but M. Gussie will be."

"And her individuality is being softened day by day," added Marguerite Southy.

The girls were speaking out of hearts mellowed by Gussie's unselfishness, and so evenly balanced had been the scales whereon hung the liking for and the prejudice against her, that her act destroyed the balance, and, presently, acting on the suggestion of Rebecca Bicknell, a solemn procession of Alpha Gammas filed up to the third floor, and in

PREPARATIONS

special sorority meeting, formally talked M. Gus-sie over and gravely "voted her in."

And Winifred was duly appointed to extend to her the following day the chapter's invitation to become its twenty-eighth active member.

CHAPTER XII

THE SURPRISE

THE car, scheduled to arrive in Cartersville at two o'clock Thanksgiving afternoon, bore the Alpha Gamma working committee, chaperoned by Mrs. Betts, who had carefully instilled into Mr. Carter's mind the fact that only the needs of her dear girls induced her to spend an afternoon in his "heathenish" and insufficiently heated abode.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Lillian as they started for the car. "It's a dreadful hardship not to see our team beat Fayette to smithereens!"

At the risk of stumbling she kept her eyes fixed on the flag which crowned the great stadium and announced the last game of the season. The roads and paths leading to the stadium were choked with people bearing the pennant of Huntingdon. Groups of students swarmed over the campus working themselves into a fine frenzy by their enthusiastic yells and songs. Just as the last member of the Cartersville party mounted the platform of the car, a group of men from the Alpha Delta Chapter House passed singing lustily:

THE SURPRISE

“Get into the game to win, boys,
Every mother’s son of you;
Stand firm along the line, boys,
Watch the ball—this time it’s going through.”

“Don’t you wish you were going to watch it go through?” asked Lillian of Joseph Amherst Pierce, who sat beside her.

And Joseph Amherst answered gallantly but not very truthfully: “Who would want to attend a ball game when he could be of some assistance to you?”

“You’ll be almost repaid,” returned Lillian sweetly, “by the sight of that prehistoric house!”

Five minutes of two found Mr. Carter standing near his “prehistoric abode” watching the approaching car eagerly. He had met every car since ten that morning, although Winifred had informed him half a dozen times that they would not reach his home before two o’clock.

His fur coat was unbuttoned, and his feet planted far apart as though to brace him against a sudden shock. His cherubic countenance was very red, and although the thermometer registered only ten above zero, his brow was covered with a fine mist as though he had been exposed to a summer day shower. He held his hat in one hand, while with the other he clutched a yellow-bordered hand-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

kerchief and mopped away the perspiration with agitated movements.

The stopping of the car, however, seemed to blot out all outward signs of agitation. It deprived him of the power of motion, leaving him a statue erected to Great Expectations. He stood bareheaded, his hair in wild confusion, attendant on the vigorous use of the handkerchief. The descent of that useful article had been arrested on a level with his chin, while he held his hat poised above his head. Between, his unwinking eyes devoured the dismounting passengers.

First came the gallant Joseph Amherst Pierce, his crown adorned by the latest shape in derbys, his feet by the latest shape in tan leather; next appeared Rebecca, followed by Winifred, Lillian, and Adelaide Prell. Beside Adelaide was a senior, Robert Hine, dubbed Adelaide's "Shadow" by the girls, because, for a year, she had worn a diminutive pearl on the third finger of her left hand, and, furthermore, the term applied was consistent with the young man's appearance. After the "Shadow" scrambled Newsy, whom the girls had picked up on the way to run errands.

As each passenger appeared, Mr. Carter's face became longer and longer, redder and redder. Finally, when it had been reduced to an apoplectic hue, and the dew on his forehead had gathered

THE SURPRISE

into raindrops, Mrs. Betts dawned on his vision in a leisurely fashion, her motions somewhat impeded by her roomy "arctics." But the moment Mr. Carter's bulging eyes fell on her, he was galvanized into action. Clapping his hat on his head he dashed forward with his hand outstretched, an expansive smile wreathing his erstwhile anxious face. The sun once more illuminated his world, and all nature beamed.

"Your first trip to Cartersville?" he boomed to the correct Joseph Amherst, wringing that young man's hand until its owner was sure it was loose at the wrist. "It's your first, but it won't be your last when I've showed you my cattle—can't be beat, they can't, in this county, if I do say it as shouldn't! And then there's my horses." His hand gripped the Shadow's, and Robert Hine openly writhed. "Wait till you've seen my colts and poultry—raised from eggs at thirty-six dollars per dozen. Hey, you little rascal! Who're you?"

This to Newsy, who, holding out a manly hand, began, "I'm"—when the words were jerked out of his mouth by an unexpected journey aloft, the "Wilmot" bursting out in an irrepressible giggle above the head of the captain of industry.

"What's you called fer short?" demanded Moses as the boy bumped the ground again.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

“ ‘Newsy!’ ” laughed the child. “ Jest ‘Newsy,’ ’n’ I’ve come along over to help fer the party, and I’m goin’ to make a dime off’n it!”

“ Shoo-fly, now!” cried Mr. Carter as joyfully as the boy. “ A dime? I’ll make it two if ye skip around good ’n’ lively!”

Then and not till then did Mr. Carter recognize the feminine portion of the party, including Mrs. Betts, in his loud salutation of “ Hello, girls! Ain’t this a nice warm day?”

“ Lovely!” responded Winifred, who was shivering in the keen air until her teeth chattered.

“ Why, it’s colder’n ‘Greenland’s icy mountains!’ ” contradicted the astonished Newsy, who was a regular attendant at church and familiar with many hymns.

But Moses paid no attention to the correction. Out of the tail of his eye he regarded Mrs. Betts, who was wordlessly but calmly shaking out her skirts.

Then the march on Cartersville began. Mr. Carter led with Joseph Amherst, who was surreptitiously nursing his right hand, while Mrs. Betts and Newsy, who gravitated naturally in her direction, brought up the rear of the procession. The anxieties which had evidently, of late, beset him were forgotten, as his small hand found its way into Mrs. Betts’ and his glance was drawn up-

THE SURPRISE

ward by the motherly sympathy and understanding in her face.

Thus they approached the grove of hemlocks and the surprise which the girls were agog with curiosity to see.

"Everything looks exactly the same as it did," whispered Lillian in Winifred's ear. "There are those awful funeral trees that you can't see through until you get up to the tops of the chimneys, and, why——! We didn't go this way before!"

The stone house, within its sheltering grove, stood in the V made by two converging public highways. On their previous visit, the girls had approached the house through the gate opening on the right fork of the road. Moses now led the party up the left fork to a similar gate forming an entrance through hemlocks as dense.

With a flourish he flung open the gate and stood aside beaming on his guests as they clattered through on the board walk. This movement brought him behind Sairy Mary Betts whom he regarded with an interest which was fairly vocal in its intensity. As she passed through the gate the low, untrimmed branches caught her hat, jerking it over one ear and causing her to mutter wrathfully:

"These un-trimmed trees are heath-enish. I wouldn't stand 'em for ——"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Here her mutter was lost in a scream from the impulsive Lillian. "Where is the dear ugly old stone house? Why-ee, see! It has disappeared!"

Mrs. Betts stopped short. She nearly fell off the walk as the "surprise" loomed up before them. "Oh, my goodness me!" she ejaculated.

The seemingly dense hemlock grove proved to be only a screen inside of which the trees had been cut down and their roots grubbed out, leaving a wide, pleasantly sloping lawn. Here and there, under the light snow, appeared the forms of flower beds—Mrs. Betts had a mania for flowers massed in "beds." There was one shaped like a heart and bordered with large shells. Another was rectangular flanked by round stones painted white.

"In the summer," announced Moses, "when I get 'round to it and have got rid of some of the work on my four hundred acres I'm goin' to cut out all them trees 'twixt us and the road, and take the fence away and grade it down." He looked at Mrs. Betts. "I left 'em there so'st everybody wouldn't know that I was a-buildin' a new house and be offerin' me advice. But with them trees all down you'll see a view that can't be beat in this county, if I do say so. You can see clean up to town in that direction," pointing, "and 'way up among the hills that way. Nothing like it, I tell ye. But what're we all standing here gawpin'

THE SURPRISE

for?" hospitably. "Come on in and see the place. It's as good as I could make it," with another glance at Mrs. Betts, "but if it can be fixed any better, why, say so, for I'm gettin' it up regardless."

"But the old stone house!" mourned Winifred. "What have you done with the old stone house?"

"Put it in my vest pocket, of course!" roared Mr. Carter, slapping his leg.

He piloted the group across the lawn at the foot of which the board walk yielded to one of stone leading to the porch of a new white house with green blinds and trimmings—green was Mrs. Betts' favorite color. The porch was wide. It emerged from the dense hemlocks which stood back of the lawn on one side of the house, ran around three sides of the surprise and disappeared among the hemlocks on the other side. Beneath it were the French windows, on which Mrs. Betts doted, and in each window hung a bird cage.

As Sairy Mary followed in Moses' wake her face was a study in emotions. Her calm was pierced and her defense of seeming indifference broken down. Her lips quivered slightly as she mounted the steps leading to the porch.

Beside the door, Moses, with a grin more expansive than any preceding it, punched a button. Within sounded the delicate tinkle of a bell.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Nice sound that," he announced. "I sent clean to Buffalo for that bell."

He opened the door, but paused on the threshold to point to a glass bulb swinging from the roof of the porch. "Electricity. Made a bargain with the trolley company for lights for the hull business," waving his hand inside the door. "They charge, they do, but that don't make no difference to me. I got this up regardless, if I do say it as shouldn't."

Adelaide peered through the open door. The smell of warm varnish and new paint greeted her nostrils. "Then you've torn down the stone house!" she accused in a tone which contained more than a suggestion of personal injury.

Before Mr. Carter would reply Lillian darted swiftly around the corner of the house crying in bewildering sequence, "I know! I understand! Come on. He hasn't, either!"

She disappeared among the hemlocks, drawing after her on slower feet the younger members of the party, Newsy bringing up the rear. In an instant her joyful shriek, "It's here! It's here!" brought the others in undignified haste. Even Joseph Amherst Pierce ran.

She was dancing about like an excited child. "Don't you see what he has done?" she demanded, parting the tangle of branches. "Here is this

THE SURPRISE

darling ugly old house and this mysterious sighing, moaning yard just as it has been for ages and ages! The houses stand back to back. See? Each faces a road, and from the white house you'd never suspect the existence of this, and from here you'd never know there was a new house near, all on account of these trees. Don't you see, girls? The white house must have been almost finished the day we were here, but we didn't see it. Ugh! How these trees talk and cry and moan and whisper. Let's go in."

Lillian stuffed her fingers into her ears as the wind stirred the hemlocks, and, clattering over the board walk rapidly, followed by the others, pulled the clamorous door-bell.

"Golly!" shouted Newsy, springing back, his eyes as big as saucers. "What's that?"

"Home-made thunder," answered Joseph Amherst who had, to the delight of his listeners, side-stepped more quickly than comported with his dignity.

In a moment a smiling girl admitted them, and they were swarming over the quaint old rooms, all talking at once. They examined the clock in the first room, turned the spinning-wheel in the "other room," as its owner named it, a room opening out of the one with which the girls were already familiar. They ran up the stone stairs

A JUNIOR CO-ED

leading from the "other room" and investigated the great four-poster beds with their wilderness of feather beds. They examined the flapping bellows and the andirons which accompanied the fireplace in every room; they sat on the bench in front of the great loom which stood as Mr. Carter's grandmother had left it with a piece of linen "drawn in," the yarn beam covered thickly by threads discolored with age.

Finally Newsy recalled the party to a sense of its duties by exclaiming, "See here, you! I gotta hustle if I make twenty cents and git back to the Hill with the papers in time. I can't hang around here all day doin' nothin'!"

"Neither can we, Newsy," cried Lillian dropping a pair of bellows.

Winifred hastily deserted the loom. "Where's the chairman of this committee? As Newsy poetically puts it, we've 'gotta hustle'!"

Adelaide, the chairman, appeared with a linen towel in her hand. "Oh, girls, look at this cloth. Woven on that loom and bound to last forever."

"Really, girls," chimed in Rebecca, "it's folly for us to go on and plan a lot of silly games. Why, this house will furnish an evening's entertainment."

"But my twenty cents ——" began Newsy in alarm.

THE SURPRISE

Winifred laughed, and squeezed the child's shoulders between her palms. "You shall earn your twenty cents, dear," she replied and Newsy, in his relief, forgave her the adjective applied to him in the presence of other men!

Down-stairs filed the workers, intent now on finding Mr. Carter.

At the back of the "other room," Winifred opened a door and found herself looking down a narrow passage and through an open doorway.

"Come on," she called to the others. "This is not the 'missing link,' but the connecting link—between the eighteenth century and the twentieth."

In single file the party marched down the passage and entered the living-room of the "civilized house" and the presence of Mrs. Betts who had spent the hour in a tour of investigation, personally conducted.

She sat tired and panting in an enormous leather armchair which with squeaks and groans proclaimed its newness. Mr. Carter, in his exuberance of spirits, had insisted on her occupying that particular chair, although her shoes, still cased in their arctics, dangled helplessly a foot from the floor, and she could scarcely catch her breath, so far back did she sink.

The surprise had made Mrs. Betts unexpectedly

A JUNIOR CO-ED

tractable, but had not dulled her sense of humor. The dimples of long ago were struggling unsuccessfully to reappear. Her eyes twinkled and her lips twitched. Long and contentedly she gazed on the grass-green Brussels rug and the highly gilded steam radiators, which Mr. Carter was at present putting through their paces for her benefit.

"They're the best I could get," he demonstrated joyfully. "Sent t' New York for 'em. See? They're hitched onto the wall instead of set on the floor so ye can put the carpets right down without cuttin' and folding back. Then you unscrew this—— Want to get busy, do you?"

The last was addressed to Winifred, who had ventured to interrupt his monologue. "All right. See here, now! I've made a little change. I had the girls clear out the north room for your corn huskin', because ye might all catch your death of cold goin' back and forth between the house and the barn to-night—girls dress so queer evenin's. But come on out now and see what corn shocks you want carried up t' the room."

He started toward the outer door, but paused in front of Mrs. Betts. "I'll be back in a minute, Sairy. But pull up to the stove—radiator, I mean, and get your feet warm. It's powerful cold to-day."

Joseph Amherst smothered a laugh in his hand-

THE SURPRISE

kerchief and beat a hasty retreat to the door. The imported radiators had done their duty by the temperature of the room until the canaries hung their beaks open and held their wings away from their warm little bodies.

"Say, Mr. Carter," exclaimed Newsy, lingering, "I never seen a house like this, never! It knocks spots off'n everything."

And because Mr. Carter's opinion exactly coincided with Newsy's, and because Newsy was consumed with honest admiration and wonder over everything in sight—not forgetting, however, to hustle for his twenty cents—Mr. Carter folded the waif, figuratively speaking, to his breast.

They left Sairy Mary gazing appreciatively at the ornate crystal chandelier from which hung dozens of dangling tinkling pendants procured "regardless."

"I'm afraid," Rebecca whispered with a backward glance as she and Winifred passed one of the French windows, "that the days of our cook in the chapter house are numbered."

Winifred nodded. "I think the surprise has made it a case of 'Barkis is willin'.' Isn't Mr. Carter a bright one to think of this? He can keep up the old stone house and the new house at the same time and live in both places. I don't wonder he is a captain of industry."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"I hope that in his excitement he won't forget to pass over our scholarship check," murmured Rebecca.

In the barn, while Joseph Amherst and the Shadow were selecting the shocks of corn, red and yellow, Mr. Carter drew Winifred aside.

"I want t' show ye over the house and tell ye something. Don't want none of these others around neither."

What he had to tell her it was not difficult for Winifred to surmise, and when, presently, she found herself at liberty to view the new home, her surmise proved correct.

Mr. Carter journeyed from room to room in a gay and genial mood, throwing wide the doors with the air of a prince exhibiting his domain.

"I know how t' get things done," he declared in a burst of self-congratulation. "I just went up t' town to Gretchel's furniture store and I called for the head fellow. 'Now,' I says t' him, 'I've got a new house that ye don't find in every day's journey, and I want it furnished from head t' hoof with the best this store can turn out,' says I. 'I want ye t' come along back with me and do your own measuring and fussin', says I. 'I want ye t' fix it up t' suit a woman that likes things nice and homelike and cozy with lots of style and color and fixin's. Everything up t'

THE SURPRISE

date,' says I, 'and a little bit beyond, if ye have t' send t' New York t' find it,' says I. 'I want this house a record breaker for your store. You'll never have a chance to fix up a better place.' Wall, he done it. Of course all he had t' do was t' follow my directions, and he done that finally. He come up here a dozen times and fooled around and asked me how much I wanted to pay for this and that until I succeeded in gettin' it through his noddle that I wanted the rooms furnished regardless. Then he went ahead. No parties ought to find fault with this house, ought they?"

"Did a party find any fault?" asked Winifred pointedly.

Mr. Carter's rubicund face took on additional color. He blew a resounding blast on his yellow bordered handkerchief and then gave his entire attention to turning the electricity on and off in the bulb which lighted a little bedroom at the end of the hall.

"No fault this trip," he murmured in a cautious tone, "with the house or with yours truly. She—ahem-m—she thinks that after Christmas, mebby, when you have had a chance to look around and git a good cook she'll ——"

Here Mr. Carter broke off and gazed abstractedly about the little room with its narrow white iron bedstead and white walls.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"She sorter takes to that little Newsy, don't she?"

"She certainly does," replied Winifred emphatically.

"She said somethin' here standin' in this very door—well, I don't have no objections. She can adopt a dozen if she wants 'em," recklessly; "I guess I can feed 'em off'n four hundred acres and seven hired men and a hundred head—— See here!" With an effort Mr. Carter came back from his dream of the future, and plunged into present realities. "You hain't seen the kitchen yet. I tell you there ain't such another kitchen in this county, if I do say it!"

At six o'clock the committee on preparations departed to rest and eat and dress for the evening, despite Mr. Carter's protest that the hired girls could feed the "whole push" in the new house.

In vain, also, he urged Mrs. Betts to return in the evening.

"Not I," said Sairy Mary firmly. "Somebody else can do the chapy-rooning to-night. I'm goin' home and get into comfortable togs and wash the dishes so that Jan-et can go out with her steady. Jan-et won't be young but once, and she ain't goin' to miss noth-ing if I can help it."

CHAPTER XIII

THE FROLIC

THE evening's fun was at its height in the unused room of the old stone house. The pine board floor was bare. The thick walls, covered with faded, dingy paper, were pierced with high, narrow bare windows protected by the same clumsy, solid wooden shutters which had protected the Revolutionary Carters from more than one attack by the Indians. In the immense fireplace the flames, crackling and snapping, curled themselves around the heaped-up logs, and then roared up the wide chimney, filling the room with a glimmering, dancing light which was strengthened by lanterns suspended from the walls and ceiling.

Mr. Carter had been determined to call in an electrician and have a wire run into the north room from the new house, thereby enabling the guests to "see by a light that was a light." He likened the room with its lanterns to a ten-acre lot on a summer night with a mess o' fireflies scattered around! When the girls protested and told him that electricity was out of keeping with the "prehistoric house," he gave up and called in all

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the lanterns which his premises afforded, saying, "Bein' wimmin, you'll have your own way whether or no!"

On the floor under these stationary "fireflies," with their backs against the wall, sat the masculine portion of the company, and in front of each man lay a shock of unhusked corn, at which some of them looked ruefully.

Landon Stearns, who had, that afternoon, made a touch-down that would be recorded in the annals of football, hugged his knees awkwardly and felt of an ear. "The thing to do, I suppose, is to tear this thing out of the husks, but how do you do it?"

The man who sat next to him husked an ear deftly while Landon watched.

"Seems easy," he muttered, "but ——" and he rolled his eyes toward the center of the table where, beneath the lantern, lay the prizes securely wrapped.

"It would be my luck," mourned Landon, "to win the rear prize."

"Which is which?" asked the other.

Landon leaned forward and looked critically at the two packages, both temptingly bulky, lying side by side on the table.

"To the unassisted eye," he decided, "they look very much alike. But one must represent quantity

THE FROLIC

and the other quality, and it's me for the quantity every time! I never fail when there's a booby prize in sight."

Gingerly he stretched out his long legs under his shock of corn and then peered over the shock in comical dismay.

"I say there!" he called, pointing; "those shoes away out there belong to me. Please don't fall over 'em any oftener than it's necessary, for I foresee I'll be too much engaged for about ten minutes to look after 'em myself!"

Ten minutes marked the duration of the contest.

"Mr. Carter, isn't it time?" implored Lillian in a voice which would lead a listener who could not look into the north room to think some one's life hung in the balance. "Can't they begin now?"

"Shoo-fly, now," shouted Mr. Carter; "keep cool there! No, it ain't. Don't git excited. Give 'em a chance to git all ready to begin."

Mr. Carter, in a state of high excitement himself, stood watch in hand near the prizes. He was in his element dispensing hospitality, showing off his new home, reciting its superiorities and inviting every one to come out to Cartersville by daylight, view his barns and stock and stay to supper!

He had arrayed himself gorgeously in his best, which consisted of a dark blue checked suit with

A JUNIOR CO-ED

patent leather shoes, green stockings and a red tie. The watch, by the aid of which he expected to time the husking, was solid and as large as he was able to obtain.

Punch created much merriment by administering an oath to the hostesses who had an important duty to perform. "Will you promise to count corn, whole corn and nothing but corn?" she asked, "and count it to the best of your knowledge of numbers?"

Every one except Lillian answered laughingly, "I will." She cried quite solemnly, "I do," and took her place in front of Army Blue.

"You must win first prize," she whispered, stooping to pick up a dried tassel from the corn shock before him.

The boy looked up at the vision in soft fluffy pink that swam before his unsteady sight.

"I shall try," he replied, "not so much for the prize as because ——" He did not finish, but bent over his allotment of corn.

"Time!" shouted Mr. Carter. "Begin! Husk corn!"

Immediately there ensued a desperate rustling of the dried leaves, mingled with thump, thump, thump, as the ears were tossed out on the floor in front of each worker and in front of his guarding hostess whose duty it was to "count corn," but

THE FROLIC

who was in each case so convulsed over the antics of the huskers that she could scarcely attend to her duty.

"I haven't laughed so much since I was in college," called Mrs. Willow to Mrs. Bois in a low tone. "I wish we were girls again!"

There were present several of the "old girls" with their husbands who had forgotten that they were old.

Mrs. Bois lowered her voice till it was lost in the general confusion. "One doesn't have to be a girl again to enjoy our host, at any rate. Listen to him!"

It was not difficult to hear him, as his voice soared aloft perpetually, directed first at one worker then at another in a riot of high spirits.

"Hello there, Willow! I never seen you sweat at that rate in the court room. You're used to making the other feller sweat there, eh? Well, keep cool, but make the husks fly faster."

"The husks didn't stick so tight to the ears when I was a boy," retorted the perspiring lawyer.

"Ha! Ha!" roared Mr. Carter, his eyes roving to the other side of the room. "Go it, Bois! Sellin' stock ain't in it with huskin' corn for stock t' eat, is it? Your kind's dead, and my kind's alive, and the one that takes care of the live stock has t' hustle. Guess you'd find that out

A JUNIOR CO-ED

if you run four hundred acres and one hundred head of cattle."

"They'd be run into the ground if I had 'em," cried Mr. Bois, hunting frantically under his shock for another ear while two stared him in the face from the top.

"Say, Stirrup," as Mr. Carter was looking at Landon Stearns he straightway appropriated the remark—Mr. Carter's memory for names being weak—"which you rather do, make a touch-up or husk corn?" Mr. Carter was not versed in terms of football, but far be it from him to acknowledge his deficiency.

Landon groaned. "Football is child's play compared with this." He was breaking the ears and scratching his fingers awkwardly.

Finally, Mr. Carter's glance alighted on Army Blue, and Mr. Carter was moved to instant admiration.

"Hey, young man! You've been there before! You know how. Say, that's letter A work."

If Army Blue heard he gave no sign. He did not speak. He never even lifted his eyes to Lillian, who balanced her dainty self on the tips of her slender toes in joyful anticipation, counting the ears aloud as they fell before her faster and faster.

Army Blue did nothing but husk corn.

THE FRÖLIC

He wore that evening for the first time the black suit which fitted him well and delighted Lillian's eyes. She looked once at the freshly polished shoes with a rent in one and a patched sole on the other, and loyally refused to look again.

"Professor," shouted Moses to Instructor Wright, "better git a gait on, or the booby prize will come handy to you. Guess you know more about dead and gone languages than about farmin'."

"'Every man to his own calling,'" quoted M. Gussie Barker quickly, and the flush of irritation which had arisen to the instructor's forehead died away. M. Gussie was counting his ears, and she had much unoccupied time at her command.

Winifred, who stood beside her, took occasion to speak under cover of the commotion. "After the prizes have been awarded, Gussie, we can slip away unnoticed for a few minutes. I have something to ask you."

"Very well," returned Gussie. Then with laughing eyes in which lay a wistful expression she put the question, "I'm on my best behavior to-night—is it all that can be desired?"

"Indeed it is!" murmured Winifred. "I've been listening to you. You've said such nice tactful things to Mr. Wright."

M. Gussie giggled faintly, and stooped over the little heap of corn at her feet. "I've lost my

A JUNIOR CO-ED

count," she smiled. "How many ears have you husked since I have been talking with Miss Lowe?"

The faculty member grinned uncheerfully. "I average three for every five minutes. I think after this you girls better play a game of baseball, and let me laugh at you."

"Oh, that wouldn't be fair," retorted Gussie. "You can laugh at us any day in the class room, while we never have an opportunity to laugh at you."

Winifred glanced at the mollified countenance of the faculty member and turned away to conceal her smiles. M. Gussie could certainly be tactful if she chose.

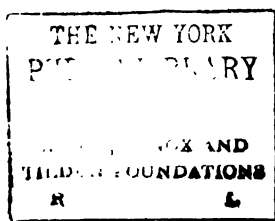
"Tactfulness is a trade that I've never over-worked," M. Gussie was wont to remark with a sigh. "It takes so long to learn it and it gets unlearned so quickly in my case."

But in view of the question she had to ask her, Winifred was pleased to observe that Gussie was working at the "trade" that evening. The "old girls" present were regarding her with lively interest, being apprized of the invitation she was about to receive.

"A remarkably fine-looking girl," Mrs. Willow, on the other side of Winifred, commented. "We shall be proud of her appearance."



"WE'VE WON! WE'VE WON!"



THE FROLIC

"But her appearance is not the best part of Gussie," responded Winifred quickly. "She's so capable and very unselfish. She will not only ornament Alpha Gamma—she will work for her."

Into the midst of this remark boomed Mr. Carter's voice, and the chatter and confusion which reigned in the north room was suddenly stilled.

"One, two, three," yelled Mr. Carter. "Time's up. Quit!" and the rustle of the corn-stalks ceased as though by magic.

Landon drew in his feet and arose holding out his bruised hands, causing them to dangle helplessly from the wrists. "Give me the booby prize," he called, "and then bring on some ointment and bind up my wounds."

"Yes," growled a senior across the room. "Stearns can afford to hang himself all over with booby prizes after the touch-down he made to-day."

"Touch-down," muttered Moses Carter thoughtfully, "down."

Then he bestowed his attention on Lillian.

Lillian was excited. Her dark eyes danced and glowed, and her feet would scarcely remain on the floor as she pointed to the heap of red corn which she was jealously guarding, shrilling in her deep voice:

"We've won! We've won! Look at our pile. None of you has half so many ears."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Just like a woman," muttered Mr. Carter musingly. "Stand by and look at a man work like blazes and then come in on half of the credit!"

The matter reached the ears of Army Blue. He made no reply, but a swift upward glance at the girl who was appropriating the fruits of his labor so naively ought to have been a satisfactory answer to the host.

There ensued a rush to the victor's corner, for the boy had so far outdistanced the rest that there remained no doubt in any one's mind even before the results of the count were reported.

Mrs. Willow, one of the judges, tossing an ear of corn at her husband to attract his attention, called laughingly, "Mr. Willow, I'm ashamed that you, an old farm-hand, should allow yourself to be outstripped by a beardless youth."

"Why, that's exactly what General Braddock said of Abraham Lincoln," cried Lillian enthusiastically, and so sure was she that, for once, she had her historical facts straight, that she did not pause to inquire into the laugh which followed, but ran to the table and seized one of the packages.

"Here it is, and we have earned it," she insisted breathlessly, her cheeks as red as blush roses.

Army Blue stood very straight, with squared

THE FROLIC

shoulders, while Mrs. Willow unwrapped and exposed the first prize, a wooden candlestick carved to represent an ear of corn emerging from its husks. This he received with dignity. Life was a serious business to Army Blue, who had never had enough of its frolics to learn how to unbend.

"This," laughed Mrs. Willow, "is to light you along the path of knowledge."

"He doesn't need it, Mrs. Willow," called a freshman from the rear of the room. "If he has any more light shed on his pathway, the rest of us can't keep him in sight."

Then, amid cries of "Good boy, Stearns!" "The ball is over with you all right!" "This is the touch-down of your career!" Landon came forward and received the "rear prize," the production of their host, a corn-stalk fiddle and bow such as he had fashioned often in his boyhood.

Landon received the prize with an air of resignation and immediately drew the bow screamingly across the resined strings stretched across the hollowed corn-stalk. Delighted with the impression which the sound made on the feminine portion of his audience, he turned to Army Blue.

"Come, Cooper, light up, won't you? We'll go around serenading. It's meet, anyway, that the two successes of the evening travel together!"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Another member of Psi Upsilon came up on the other side of the candlestick bearer and Lillian, making her way to Winifred's side, pushed that young lady almost into the fireplace in order to get her out of hearing of the rest while she demanded: "Do you see how the Psi U's swarm around Army Blue to-night? And do you see how the Alpha Deltas are trying to get near him? Now do you suppose it can mean—oh, I'm on tip-toe to find out if it really means he's going to be rushed! And I really don't know which frat I should advise him to join. And, Winifred, do you suppose he'll feel too poor to join either if he is asked? Doesn't he look perfectly splendid in that black suit? I don't care if his shoes are old. There's just that much more chance for him to become famous, because all famous men wore patched shoes when they were young, and not many of 'em at that, and ——"

But some one called just then for Miss Antwerp, and Lillian, leaving her sentence uncompleted, hurried away to answer the call.

For an instant Winifred stood alone beside the fireplace laughing at this excited flood of observations, and as she stood there, Landon and Army Blue worked themselves to the outskirts of the crowd, and stood in front of her without noticing who was behind them.

THE FROLIC

"I want a pencil. Who has a pencil?" asked Marguerite Southy, who had the next game in charge.

A dozen men began to search their pockets, and among them Army Blue, but to Winifred's observant eye, he did not seem very familiar with those useful receptacles. With diligence, however, he went through them, arriving at the inner pockets of the coat just as Landon stepped forward with the desired article, saying to Marguerite :

"I'll exchange a pencil for your promise that there's no booby prize connected with the next number on the program."

Army Blue, drawing back still nearer Winifred, had discovered on the inside of his coat a pocket too deep and narrow to admit his whole hand. It was evidently intended for a bill-book or a check-book, and as evidently its wearer had not found it before. He proceeded to investigate it by pushing the bottom up to meet the fingers of the other hand. Suddenly, Winifred saw the expression on his face change. A look of astonishment was followed by one of dismay as he drew something from the pocket and glancing down at it thrust it hurriedly back again.

His hands fell to his sides and his chin dropped until his eyes looked straight down to the floor, at which he gazed unseeing, all the lines about them

A JUNIOR CO-ED

indicating perplexity. A moment he stood motionless, then as his name was spoken from the end of the room, he aroused himself, buttoned up his coat and responded.

At the same time Gussie's voice sounded in Winifred's ears. "Here I am, ready to answer that question you wished to ask me."

Winifred slipped her hand beneath Gussie's arm, led her down the old stone stairs and into the deserted and overheated living-room of the "civilized house," but all the time she was asking herself what Army Blue had found which had made such a profound impression on him.

"I'm afraid it is a paper or old envelope which will give away the giver," she thought, adding fervently, "I hope not, for then he would put the clothes on his list of indebtedness and that list is too long already."

Under the wonderful chandelier the girls stopped in the flood of light flashing and scintillating through the twinkling glass pendants. Gussie, throwing her weight carelessly on one foot, stood easily, her red lips curved into an inquiring smile. Her pose was one of extreme independence, but her humorous affectionate dark eyes belied her pose, inviting companionship and all the joys of girlhood.

With the solemnity and gentle dignity which

THE FROLIC

her mission invoked, Winifred told the other of the enthusiastic discussion and unanimous ballot on her name the previous day, and extended the invitation for her to become the twenty-eighth Alpha Gamma. But the instant the formality of the invitation was ended, the inviter ran impulsively forward and throwing her arms about Gussie cried :

"Oh, Gussie, I'm so glad it's done at last, and that I was chosen to do it."

Gussie drew a long breath and smoothed the fair head against her shoulder. "I'm glad also," she said simply. "The invitation is the greatest honor that has come to me in Huntingdon—or, as I feel about it now, could come. To be chosen by twenty-seven lovely girls—to be one of them—thank you, Winifred."

Suddenly Winifred drew back, and placing her hands on Gussie's shoulder looked at her in sudden alarm. There was a queer note in her voice. It was low and did not speak of triumph, and her eyes were moist. Her lips no longer smiled, but were fixed in a determined red line.

"Gussie Barker!" cried Winifred in a suppressed voice. "Why, Gussie Barker!"

"No," Gussie answered Winifred's tone, "I can't." She took the hands from her shoulders and held them in a warm clasp. "It's this way,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred. All last year I pretended to scorn the sororities because none of them wished me, and I was determined not to show how it hurt—for it did hurt!" She paused, catching her lower lip between her teeth for an instant. "I wanted to 'belong' somewhere, and after I learned to—to care for you, I wanted to be an Alpha Gamma. I came to want it more than honors or anything else that college could give me. Not that I think Alpha Gamma is so far ahead of the other sororities as its members think"—in her earnestness Gussie did not forget her appalling honesty—"but because I had come to love so many of its members."

"I am glad you do," cried Winifred obstinately, refusing to acknowledge Gussie's unbelievable refusal, "because you are to be one of us—indeed you are! We have invited you, and Alpha Gamma has never yet lost an invitation."

"No," responded Gussie gently, "I can't accept. No, listen. When I went back home last summer, I felt pretty bad, I tell you, because I wore no sorority pin and could tell of—that sorority's exclusiveness," frankly, "and of the good times the members had together. Then I got to thinking. And when I came back, I thought more along the same line. I began to look around me—and, Winifred, I found that the spirit that actuates the girls in joining sororities—and it's the same with

THE FROLIC

the men—is always, ‘I’ll try to join the one where I can get the most benefit.’ And the thought which would not let me alone was that perhaps this is not the best spirit.”

Here Gussie dropped Winifred’s hands and turned away, wearing the embarrassed air which always covered her when she tried to tell—or to avoid telling—anything which might reflect credit on herself.

“Well, Gussie?” Winifred’s voice was a trifle constrained, for was not her beloved sorority suffering its first loss in invitations?

“It seems to me the better spirit is, Winifred, and please don’t think me prudish or sermonizing, or anything like that,” Gussie turned back imploringly, “for all this is just for me, remember, not for any one else—but the thought would come—I didn’t want it—but I couldn’t get rid of it—and the thought is, ‘I ought to join a sorority with the idea of giving rather than receiving.’ And so—when the Thetas——”

“Oh, Gussie, that little new Theta?” Winifred dropped back in dismay.

“Yes, ‘little new Theta,’ where there is a load of work to do and where money and—and brains are needed—there’s so much there that ought to be given. They invited me the first of the year, but I was fighting this thought then, Winifred—I told

A JUNIOR CO-ED

you I didn't want to hold it—but it wouldn't be downed. And ——”

“You have accepted the Theta invitation?” interrupted Winifred.

“No, not yet. It's open to me ——”

“Then,” insisted Winifred, “there is nothing to prevent you from coming to us.”

Gussie raised her head and looked at Winifred steadily. “I shall give them their answer tomorrow,” she spoke quietly, “and it will be ‘yes.’”

“Gussie!”

“You are a strong sorority with a strong alumnae back of you and a record for scholarship and achievement in college. The Thetas have nothing back of them, no alumnae nor achievements of any kind. All they have is a future—and, Winifred, I shall help make that future to the best of my ability.”

As the girl stood tall and handsome, the humility of renunciation mingled with the pride of her strong resolution, there flashed through Winifred's mind Lillian's impulsive, nonsensical, “I can never be a glorious alumna, but Gussie will be.”

Then Winifred's sense of fairness, her admiration and liking for the other, overcame her sorority pride and resentment, and she held out

THE FROLIC

both hands with the warm exclamation, "Gussie, you are glorious already!"

Gussie's eyes filled as she clasped Winifred's hands closely. Her voice broke. "No one but you must know, Winifred, how—how badly I want to be an Alpha Gamma."

"Winifred, Winifred!" called a voice in the passage. "Where's Winifred?"

"Here," she answered and going out closed the door softly behind her, leaving Gussie to master her tears alone.

In the "other room" stood Army Blue, watching the narrow hall alertly, and as soon as Winifred appeared he went to meet her.

"Miss Lowe," he began hastily, "I have made a discovery, and I want to tell you about it and ask your advice. There may not be any opportunity to-night, but if there is——" he broke off inquiringly.

"If there is, I'll come to you," she answered hastily, and hurried away determined not to allow the opportunity to come.

"If he ran on the Stearns' name in that pocket," she thought, "and should question me—why, I can't lie about it, but," here her little chin came up at an obstinate angle, "I can avoid hearing about it—Landon hates so to be thanked or paid back or fussed over!"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Therefore, during the remainder of the evening, she avoided Army Blue, and the departure of guests and hostesses occurred without his having found a chance to unburden his mind concerning his discovery.

Winifred, dreading the arrival at the chapter house, where she would be overwhelmed with questions about M. Gussie Barker, walked to the car between Landon and Mr. Carter, who still overflowed with joyful spirits.

"Right here and now," he made proclamation at the top of his voice, "I invite the Alphy—Alphy"—he stumbled a moment over the name and then brought out with a whoop the appropriate term—"the Alphy gals to come every year for a Thanksgivin' party as long as I'm alive!"

The men answered in an appropriate style which left Mr. Carter nothing to desire in the way of noise, under cover of which he addressed Winifred in a stage whisper :

"I'm goin' up t' your place in the mornin', and I'll hand over that check t' a certain party. Of course, she'll be surprised, not knowin' how it happened—and," anxiously, "she mustn't know—because, at the best, wimmin are so uncertain there's no knowin' what might happen—and leave me with that new house empty on my hands!"

CHAPTER XIV

LILLIAN'S RING

FRIDAY morning, Winifred, taking Lillian with her, went down-town and called on Mr. Willow in his office.

She was glad to leave the chapter house for a few hours until the breeze of resentment against M. Gussie had died away and the girls had come to recognize—as recognize they would—the nobility and self-sacrifice which had prompted the refusal of their invitation.

“They will finally like her all the better for her attitude and action,” Winifred thought and then was forced to admit to herself that, perhaps, after all, they would like her better as a Theta than as an Alpha Gamma, because M. Gussie was bound to “agitate” to the end of her days, and also bound occasionally to break through the social conventions which were upheld rigorously and wisely—by the oldest sorority on the Hill.

The errand in Mr. Willow's office was soon disposed of. That gentleman congratulated the girls on the success of the party of the previous even-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

ing, and then gave a low whistle when informed that their host had promised to finish the scholarship that day with a check.

"A great character he is!" exclaimed Mr. Willow. "I had forgotten all about the five thousand dollars he advertised to give away. Thought he was simply getting a deal of amusement out of the ad. in his own peculiar way. Well, you are in luck."

Lillian, knowing how they came to be "in luck," giggled, but Winifred, with no further delay, stated the object of their call.

Briefly she outlined the case of the diamond ring which Lillian had given as security "to help out a poor student," and Mr. Willow, listening attentively, did not see the color deepen in Lillian's cheeks.

"We can arrange for its redemption easily," he made answer briskly when Winifred had finished her story and preferred her request. "I will advance the first year's interest on the two thousand at once, as soon as Carter's check comes into my hands, and you can pay the tuition, so that Miss Antwerp," with a glance at the beaming Lillian, "can go home with the ring on her finger, and," he added emphatically, "have a merrier Christmas for the knowledge that it represents a benefit to some one else."

LILLIAN'S RING

"Now," cried Lillian with sparkling eyes when they were once more on the street, "we can go and see the registrar right away!"

"Wait until our shopping is done," laughed Winifred.

All day they marched from store to store, not arriving at the chapter house until after six o'clock.

As they opened the hall door they heard sounds of a jubilee issuing from the dining-room. The girls had finished dinner, but were gathered about the table nearest the kitchen door where Mrs. Betts was eating—or trying to eat—alone, it being Janet's afternoon out.

Sairy Mary sat at the head of the table, her feet stretched out comfortably and crossed. She leaned back as she ate, skilfully conveying her food across her expanse of shirt-waist front. Sometimes the conveying was done by means of a knife, sometimes by a fork, depending on which implement was nearest to her hand.

"I always eat so'st' enjoy my vit-tles," was her gastronomic motto.

At present, however, she was doing more laughing than talking, her shoulders heaving at the sight of Rebecca Bicknell standing on a chair waving aloft a narrow yellow strip of paper, and "orating," assisted by twenty others who seemed to have utterly forgotten that Alpha Gamma had

A JUNIOR CO-ED

undergone the "disgrace" of "losing an invitation."

"Here's to Mr. Moses Carter," Rebecca was crying as Winifred and Lillian arrived on the scene. "Long may he wave, and lucky may he be." Her eyes fell meaningly on Mrs. Betts.

"And welcome will he ever be to Alpha Gamma!" added Marguerite Southy. "In grateful memory will she ever hold his name!"

"And here's to our dear Mrs. Betts," exclaimed Flossie Rogers with shrill emphasis. "May she continue to wave at the Alpha Gamma House and make salads——" Flossie, stopping to smack her lips, lost the conversational floor.

Mrs. Betts smiled, but behind the smile lay a puzzled expression. Wordlessly, she raised a dish of custard, held it just under her chin and proceeded to "enjoy" it by slow spoonfuls.

Then it was that the girls discovered Winifred and Lillian standing in the doorway. Rebecca at once pounced on them, thrusting the check into Lillian's face.

"Go up and claim your ring," she commanded laughingly. "Mr. Carter has sent us a check for the rest of the scholarship."

Before Mrs. Betts, of course, the girls maintained an attitude of surprised delight lest she should yet smell the rat of Mr. Carter's fears.

LILLIAN'S RING

"As for me and mine," laughed Rebecca, "I feel sorry for Mr. Carter. I fear our home has been turned into a house of inquisition, but Mrs. Betts won't describe the thumbscrews and racks she has used to draw out these checks. There have been no sounds of anguish from the kitchen, and I met Mr. Carter going away this afternoon with a smile on his face, so I judge the Betts' inquisition isn't as painful as the Spanish ——"

Without awaiting the end of Rebecca's speech, Lillian turned on Winifred impulsively: "Winifred Lowe, come back up to college with me this minute and—and explain to the registrar."

Without delaying to eat their dinner the two started for the Hill, and the light which glowed brightly from one window only, on the second floor of the Hall of Languages.

"I do hope," sighed Lillian, "that he won't be mad because we haven't said anything to him about it before."

"I'm sure," comforted Winifred, "that there's nothing to make him angry. The month is barely up. He could not expect a payment inside a month."

"It's been six weeks plus one day," corrected Lillian, adding, "He'd be sad rather than mad if he stood in my poverty-stricken shoes."

As the articles in question were fine gray suede,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred laughed outright. "Now, Lillian, confess. Aren't you enjoying life almost as much as usual?"

Lillian considered the matter seriously. "Why—yes," she admitted, "except about one hour a day when I get to thinking how unhappy I ought to be—and sometimes, Winifred," earnestly, "I really am. Last night I stayed awake at least an hour worrying. I think it was an hour," she added honestly, "but chum said I was snoring inside of fifteen minutes. Think of her saying that," indignantly, "and I'm sure I never snored in my life! If I did it would wake me up and," conclusively, "I never awaken!"

Outside of the door she laid her commands on Winifred. "You must do the talking, as long as this is business. You know I can't keep business things straight."

As on that other night six weeks before they found the registrar putting his books away preparatory to going home. The door of the safe stood open, and Lillian gazed hungrily at the interior as she stopped in front of the counter.

"We came," began Winifred directly, "to talk to you about the ring."

The registrar, in the act of putting a massive ledger in the safe, paused, and sitting back on his heels, turned a questioning face on his visitors. "Ring?"

LILLIAN'S RING

"Yes, don't you recall the diamond ring ——"

"My ring," elucidated Lillian unable to maintain the silence which she had enjoined on herself, "my investment ring."

"She put it in pawn for Sayles Cooper's tuition," promoted Winifred.

"And I was to pay on it every month, and six weeks have gone past and I haven't," added Lillian, "because father has lost his money and we—we are dreadfully poor now." Her tone became as doleful as though she were clad in rags instead of Persian lamb.

The registrar allowed the ponderous tome to slip to the floor. He ran his freed hands through his hair, causing it to stick straight up, giving his mild face a wild expression. Then he pivoted about on his heels and sat on the book.

"Yes—I—recall—now." He measured the words off in a way which indicated anything save a lively recollection. "You say it was six weeks ago—yes, yes."

He smoothed his hair down nervously and proceeded immediately to rumple it up again. "Yes, I ——"

"You put it in the safe," Winifred reminded him anxiously.

"In the safe," repeated the registrar. His tone sounded alarmingly uncertain.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"You put it in a big brown envelope and licked the flap," insisted Lillian. "Can you forget?"

"It's in the safe," urged Winifred, the man's dazed manner striking a chill to her heart. "It must be in the safe."

Without a word, the registrar turned, flopped over weakly on his knees and began unlocking and rummaging compartment after compartment. Winifred, followed by Lillian, pale but silent, swung open the little gate at the side of the counter and stood behind the registrar.

"It's not here," he announced finally in a hushed voice.

He struggled to his feet and faced the girls, his own face as pale as theirs.

"I confess I have not thought of that ring or the entire business from that day to this—now it all comes back to me, only—what did I do with the ring?"

He sat back against the counter, crossed his feet and sunk his pointed chin in his palms. "What did I do with that ring?" he repeated, with the air of a man just awaking.

"You licked the flap," quavered Lillian, leaning against the wall. This fact lingered unexpectedly in her memory.

"Let's go back over the circumstances," suggested the registrar looking at Winifred, who

LILLIAN'S RING

promptly began the recital, beginning with the conversation the girls had overheard.

She had not gone far when the registrar came suddenly and excitedly to his feet, and began to run his fingers through his hair again.

"See here," he interrupted, "I had put the ring into an envelope ——"

"Yes, I saw you lick its flap," came in wan tones from the corner where Lillian had sunk, a dejected heap, on a pile of catalogues setting forth the merits of her alma mater.

"And I laid the envelope right here," the man turned and indicated a spot on the counter, "and then we went to the window to see if we could see Cooper ——"

He paused, his finger extended toward the window, and then brought his hand down on the counter with a resounding whack. "Newsy!" he almost shouted. "Yes, Newsy!" In the name he seemed to think he had the Alpha and Omega of the whole affair. "Don't you see?" he asked. "Newsy was in here."

"Yes, but I don't see!" declared Lillian. "I don't see anything that Newsy had to do with it except get Army Blue."

"You can't think that Newsy ——" Winifred began and stopped.

The registrar turned to the counter. His voice

A JUNIOR CO-ED

was positive now. "I laid the envelope down right here. It was here when Newsy came in, was it not?"

"Y-yes," confirmed Winifred.

"Well, all right. Now, I know that when Cooper came in this counter was empty—clear—nothing on it. I recall that distinctly because I remember running my hands over it as I stood here talking to him—I have an unfortunate habit of doing something with my hands whenever my tongue is at work—and I remember getting a sliver in my thumb from that broken edge——" he pointed.

"But we didn't leave the room until after Newsy left," Winifred objected.

"Did you notice the envelope on the counter when you left?" he demanded.

"No," confessed Winifred. "I have no recollection of the envelope at all."

"Nor I," added Lillian, "except that you licked ——"

"It was there," the registrar interrupted, "before Newsy came in, and it was not there after he went out. That much I remember."

"I don't believe he took it, so there!" Lillian exclaimed resentfully.

"I didn't say he took it," rejoined the registrar quickly.

LILLIAN'S RING

"But you think so," retorted Lillian.

"I shall at least question the boy," returned the registrar slowly, "but first we—I must make a thorough search here."

"Let us help you," volunteered Winifred eagerly.

For an hour they worked anxiously, and almost in silence. Every nook of the safe was overhauled, every cranny in the room gone over. The floor was nearly covered with a rug, and after everything else failed they raised the rug and looked beneath it. Lillian on her hands and knees crawled about the floor feeling under the desk and counter. Finally the registrar moved both out to make sure that the envelope was not lodged behind them. The waste paper basket received Winifred's close attention, but not only did it reveal no ring, but the registrar said that it was emptied once a day.

After the room was thoroughly inspected, Winifred opened the door leading into the tiny closet in which were crowded a wash-basin, the registrar's hat and coat, the broom, dust-pan, carpet-sweeper and dust-cloth used in the cleaning of the two offices. Together, the two girls pulled everything removable out and searched, but all in vain.

"The ring is gone," announced Lillian solemnly.

The registrar sat down on the counter and wiped

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the perspiration from his face. He made no reply, nor did he look at the girls. The result of the affair which concerned him filled his horizon, but it was a result which neither of the girls realized.

"The next thing that I shall do," he said at last, "is to see Newsy." His voice shook slightly.

"You're not going to accuse——" Lillian began.

"Accuse no one—yet," returned the registrar in a voice sharp with anxiety, and with this assurance the girls left the office.

Along College Road a small figure was marching to the tune of "News here—two cents for all the news—buy your pa-pier right here."

"I don't believe——" began Winifred.

"Nor I!" vehemently from Lillian.

Both girls lapsed into troubled silence.

"Paper here," shrilled Newsy at them. "Evenin' News—all the news fer two cents."

Winifred shook her head. "We have it at the house."

Newsy stopped and looked hopefully at Lillian, who, true to her instinct, at once hunted in her hand-bag for her purse.

Winifred looked down on the small nine-year-old boy, her thoughts going back over the slight circumstantial evidence which the registrar had deduced.

LILLIAN'S RING

"It amounts to nothing," she was concluding indignantly, when her eyes fell on the child's new outfit. With a slight shock she recalled occasions when Newsy had failed to respond with his usual frankness to the inquiries concerning his new clothes, and when Mrs. Betts and Army Blue had commented on the fact that he did not seem like himself.

"And I intended to ask Landon where he got them, and forgot to do it," Winifred thought, as Newsy, with Lillian's two cents in his hand, hurried toward the Psi Upsilon House, yelling lustily, "Here's yer bargain papier—all the news—Evenin' News, two cents."

As the girls neared the chapter house Sayles Cooper appeared coming up College Road. He walked rapidly, his cap drawn so far over his eyes that he did not see them.

"I hope he will never know," said Lillian earnestly, "that his tuition this year has cost six hundred dollars."

A few moments later, the two belated ones were seated, one on each side of the table, pretending to eat, as they described the scene in the registrar's office, the girls gathered about them in troubled silence, Mr. Carter's check forgotten, and their joy swallowed up in sympathy for Lillian.

Finally that young lady, pushing her custard

A JUNIOR CO-ED

away untasted, her face so long that one could not even imagine the existence of dimples, suddenly broke out with the information, given with the solemnity of an obituary :

“Girls, you would have died laughing if you had seen the registrar make pompadours of his corn-colored hair.”

Needless to say that the troubled silence was broken.

CHAPTER XV

MICE AND MEN

WINIFRED lingered with Mrs. Betts after the others had gone up-stairs, and asked her opinion concerning Newsy's possible part in the disappearance of the ring.

Sairy Mary's words were more comforting than her face, which reflected her inner anxiety. The boy had crept far into her heart.

"Law, child! He's no thief, and I know it. I wish I had him with me now in-stead of waitin'——" here Mrs. Betts checked herself abruptly, and began another sentence. "How'd a chick like him know a diamond from a piece of glass? Nonsense! Don't you take too much stock in what that chuck-le-headed regis-trar up there says. Still," Mrs. Betts' voice was a trifle uncertain, "Newsy has act-ed queer lately—as Dick's hat-band."

This last sentiment was echoed by Landon the morning following when he walked over to the auditorium with Winifred. He whistled when

A JUNIOR CO-ED

she outlined the events which had taken place in the registrar's office, and, stuffing his hands into his pockets, frowned down at the walk.

"I haven't seen much of Newsy for, let me see—yes," reluctantly, "for about a month now. He hasn't been up to my room as usual. He comes to the house with papers, though, and I've seen him—yes, now I remember hailing him one night and asking him where he got his new suit, or how he got it. Don't remember just what I said, but it was something about the suit, and I noticed at the time that the little rascal didn't answer my question, but got out. Can it be——"

"No, it can't be!" returned Winifred decidedly.

"That is"—Landon gave her a humorous side-long glance—"you don't want it to be true, therefore it isn't—that's like a girl!"

"And it's like a man to use his reason on a few present facts and forget all about what has been," retorted Winifred. "Has Newsy ever taken anything from your room? He's been up there, you say, lots of times when you were out."

Landon shook his head. "No, I've never missed a thing, Winifred, and he's been there when my pocketbook was on my desk, and loose change lying about—no, I can't think that Newsy took that ring."

"Of course not, but I do wish it might be

MICE AND MEN

found. It's too bad for Lillian to lose it now just when her father is in financial trouble."

That the loss was Lillian's the girls did not question, nor was any other idea presented to them until that evening when they had gathered in the library after dinner. Then a new light was shed on the subject over the long distance 'phone.

Erma Cunningham had just asked Lillian if she had written to her father.

"Yes," Lillian replied, "I 'fessed up to the handle and sent the letter out last night. He has received it by this time. I told him all about it. I think I wrote twelve pages."

Then it was that the telephone bell rang and Clara, who answered it, turned to Lillian. "For you," she said laconically and the room became still at once while Lillian went to the telephone.

"Oh—papa—is that you?" Lillian began.

Then, "But, papa, I told you. I wrote twelve pages ——"

Again she listened, an expression of bewilderment dawning on her face.

"Why-ee, I guess so. A receipt? He handed me something, I remember, right away, before he licked the flap of the envelope, but I laid it down and I don't remember—maybe Winifred does—— Oh, Winifred is the girl who—want to talk with her?—yes, she's right here."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Lillian drew back and turned her bewildered face toward Winifred. "It's papa, and he's saying such a queer thing. I think it would be mean to ——"

But Winifred, not waiting to get Lillian's full opinion, was speaking into the transmitter. "Yes—I was with her. The registrar gave her a receipt—yes. She dropped it into the waste basket, but I picked it out—yes, I'm sure it's in my desk now—I forgot to give it to her—yes, I'll look it up and send it myself."

There was a pause during which a confused sound escaped from the transmitter to show that Mr. Antwerp was talking, but no words revealed the cause of the expressions on Winifred's face. They varied from delight to dismay.

"It's queer," she said finally, when the voice ceased, "that I never thought of that; yes, I am very glad also," in a dubious voice. "Good-bye."

"Well, I'm not," Lillian broke out indignantly. "I think papa will be mean if he makes that poor little corn-colored registrar pay for the ring! He didn't want it in the first place. I made him take it, you remember."

In her desk Winifred found the receipt which promised the ring to Lillian on the payment of one hundred dollars tuition—and according to Mr. Antwerp, the loss of the jewel meant a loss, not to

MICE AND MEN

Lillian, but to the underpaid "corn-colored registrar," who had, unknown to the girls, perspired in that knowledge the previous evening.

"And now papa will pay the tuition and collect six hundred," mourned Lillian. "And I don't believe the registrar is worth six hundred cents—I saw a patch on his trousers the other day!"

Then she arose decisively. "I shall write to papa this minute, and give him all the reasons why he must not ask for that six hundred. I can collect my thoughts better on paper, and besides," pensively, "stamps are cheaper than long distance 'phone messages."

For an hour she "collected her thoughts" on five sheets of paper so thin that Mr. Antwerp turned them over in disgust to his stenographer to decipher. And in the entire five sheets his daughter gave only one reason which caused him to hesitate in the path he had laid out for the worried registrar to walk in. After telling at length what a dear Winifred Lowe was, how lovely and brave Army Blue had turned out to be, how patched the registrar's trousers were—one pair at least—and how perfectly awfully terrible she felt over the idea of her parent's collecting the money of said patched individual, Lillian chanced to add a postscript saying that "anyway, the registrar had hated to receive the ring, and did so only

A JUNIOR CO-ED

when Winifred and I urged him. We fairly made him take it," exaggerated Lillian.

It was this postscript which caused Mr. Antwerp to dictate to his daughter the letter which she received two days later.

In the meantime she sighed a dozen times a day. "Oh, dear! I'm always getting into messes!"

But the crowning feature and outcome of the "mess" was yet to be revealed.

The fourth day following the discovery of the loss of the ring, Winifred, entering the kitchen after dinner, found Mrs. Betts preparing to spend the evening with Anne Sweet.

Her hair was twisted into a firm knob capable of holding her black felt hat in place. Encircling the knob were two rows of puffs made of much darker hair than her own, but to this incongruity its wearer was serenely indifferent. She wore a new black silk dress with leg-o'-mutton sleeves. Tight sleeves were in fashion but leg-o'-muttons were far more comfortable, hence their appearance on her plump arms. The skirt, which she referred to as her only "hobble," measured five yards around the bottom, she having made a concession of one yard to the demands of fashion and the indignant protests of her dressmaker. About her neck was a white "string" tie which she had worn

MICE AND MEN

for twenty years and intended to wear at least ten longer. It ended in "real thread lace."

"They ain't worn now for the sim-ple reason that they can't be had ex-cept for a lot of money," Mrs. Betts calmly asserted, her eyes twinkling the while. "I like string ties. I've always wore 'em and I al-ways shall so long as I can make 'em or buy 'em."

Her coat, laid over the back of a chair, was of the finest broadcloth. It was tailor-made because no ready-made coat would admit within its own sleeves Sairy Mary's leg-o'-muttons.

"And I did have a time with that tail-or," gasped Mrs. Betts struggling into the coat. "Men are that ob-stinate—the best of 'em. Be-cause no one else had a coat made this way he did-n't see why he had to make mine like this. And I could-n't see, as long as I was a-payin' for it, why I shouldn't have it made the big-ness that I wanted. I told him that he wa'n't dealing with no fai-ry form, and that I'd own to fifty—but I would have big sleeves in my coat. And then he give in."

Winifred buttoned the ample coat about the non-fairy form, laughing until she could scarcely see the buttons, while its wearer drew on her gloves, long-wristed driving kids lined with fur.

"The clerk didn't want to sell me these gloves," Mrs. Betts went on. "Cu-rious how everybody

A JUNIOR CO-ED

wants me to dress ac-cordin' to their idees. She wanted to squeeze my hands into number sevens, with short wrists and no lining. Huh! Ketch me a-squeezin' my hands—or feet either. I hain't got a corn nor a bunion, and I don't aim to have either."

While Winifred was tying on her veil Mrs. Betts recalled something which had temporarily escaped her mind.

"Now about that ring that's lost. I don't suppose there's a man up to college that will think of rats or rat-holes, but they're there just the same."

Winifred stood with the ends of the veil in her fingers. "I never thought of rats—have they——"

"That worthless first boy we had told me," interrupted Mrs. Betts. She began to shake. "His coat tail got caught in the cellar door one day and I had to get the door o-pen and put him loose. And you bet-ter believe I didn't hurry none, ei-ther. He had time to tell me quite a few things. Said there was rat-traps set in the cellar all the time and mice everywhere. Now you tell that registrar that he better pay more at-tention to rats and less to New-sy."

Then a worried look crept into Mrs. Betts' eyes. "As for that boy, if he don't come and see me to-morrow, I'm goin' to send for him."

With this Mrs. Betts departed on her broad,

MICE AND MEN

capable feet encased in warm "arctics," and Winifred went slowly up the back stairs revolving the rat theory in her mind. "I'll speak to the registrar about it, at any rate," she decided.

In the hall Janet met her with a card. "I've been looking for you everywhere, Miss Lowe. There's a caller in the back parlor."

Winifred frowned slightly as she took the card. It was not Saturday evening, and Landon knew he was forbidden the luxury of a midweek call.

He arose with comical apprehension as she entered the room. "Now, Winifred, don't scold," he pleaded. "I've come on a special errand, and one which wouldn't wait over."

"Not even until we met on the Hill in the morning?" questioned Winifred, trying to look the displeasure she did not feel.

Landon shook his head and drew a piece of paper from his pocket. His face became grave. "That ring business has taken a turn which I don't like——" Winifred had told him all the circumstances connected with it from first to last, save only the fact that it was put in pawn to keep Sayles Cooper in college.

"The ring. Oh, Landon, have you found out——"

Landon shook his head. "Found out nothing about the ring—this is about Newsy. Yesterday

A JUNIOR CO-ED

I dropped into the office to talk that boy up to the registrar, and found him hopping about like a chestnut on a red-hot stove, with his molasses-candy hair sticking straight up—he was so excited. It seems he had sent for Newsy, and had begun to question him, and the first time his back was turned—student came in and had to be attended to—the little rascal cut and run, leaving his stock of precious ‘papiers’ behind. Well, the registrar took this as a sure sign of guilt, and was going to have him arrested at once——”

“Landon!”

“But he didn’t, for Newsy evidently didn’t stop running in some time. He’s gone.”

“Gone where?” asked Winifred blankly.

“Don’t know. He’s cleared out—skipped.” Landon’s light words were at variance with the undertone of anxiety in his voice. “To-day I hunted up his aunt’s home and found her in commotion over a note he’s left. Here it is.”

Winifred took the soiled paper and read:

“You never Am going to see Me any more. I have Run Away. tell Mis’ Bets and Mister Sterns I Never Stole no Ring, but They will try and put Me in the Coop for It. But they can’t ketch me.”

For a moment Winifred and Landon looked at each other in silence.

MICE AND MEN

"Well—what do you think?" asked the latter. "One thing I forgot to tell you—he left that new suit behind him, and got out in his old clothes. His aunt said he had the new suit on in the morning, and that he must have crept up-stairs when her back was turned, changed into his old suit and taken to his heels. What do you think of that, after the queer way he has acted over those clothes—and getting them when he did ——"

"I don't know what to think," reiterated Winifred helplessly. "But I believe in Newsy." Then she asked hastily, "Did you speak to the aunt about the suit?"

Landon nodded. "But she knows no more about it than we do. She said he came down-stairs one morning with it on, and said he had bought it, and that's all she knew. It was easy to be seen that the woman does not trouble herself about the boy at all except to take part of his earnings."

Winifred looked down a moment silently at the soiled paper bearing the assurance that no one in Huntingdon would see Newsy "no more."

Then she asked abruptly, "What are you going to do about it? And what is the registrar going to do?"

"I presume the registrar will try to hunt down both Newsy and the ring, and I—well, Winifred,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

I'm going after that new suit business. I want to find out where he bought it, and how and what money he had when he paid for it. And, I suppose," reluctantly, "it's my duty to tell the registrar about it."

"Poor little Newsy," sighed Winifred.

"If he wasn't as quick as a trigger I should scout the idea of his understanding the value of a diamond, and being able to dispose of it without being suspected right in the start. But, you see, the boy has a street education, and that is a valuable asset when it comes to trickery—and there are always pawn dealers ready to snap at valuables and cover the tracks of the ones who bring 'em in."

Despite Landon's reasoning, however, Winifred went back up-stairs firm in the belief of Newsy's innocence. "I won't condemn him," she said from the lower step, "on any such circumstantial evidence."

"Nor I," promised Landon with his hands on the door-knob, "but I want that evidence either destroyed or confirmed before I can go to sleep in the matter."

While the two were talking in the back parlor, the postman arrived, and the budget of mail had been at once confiscated by Lillian, who found therein a letter from her father.

MICE AND MEN

At the head of the stairs half a dozen hands laid hold of Winifred and hurried her into Lillian's room.

Lillian sat Turk fashion on the floor in front of the hot air register rereading the brief letter aloud to each new girl who appeared on the scene. When Winifred arrived she looked up exhausted with much reading and translated the epistle into her own language :

" Papa says he will hold the receipt and write to Corn-color that he'll give him a certain time in which to recover the ring before he collects. That's much better than to collect at once, isn't it? But that poor man will have to have his wife patch the rest of his trousers, won't he, in case he can't find the diamond ? "

Then she sighed. " Such a mess to come right on top of Mr. Carter's check, that would have made everything right. "

It was with great reluctance that Winifred related to the assembled girls the outcome of the " mess " in regard to Newsy, and without waiting to talk it over, she escaped to her room, hung out her sign and sitting down, laid her head against the back of the chair and closed her eyes.

" So much excitement makes my head spin, " she muttered, and fell asleep resolving to inter-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

view the registrar at her first opportunity on the subject of rats.

The opportunity came the following morning, which was Saturday, when she went up to the chancellor's office to type some letters that Dean Holbrooke had dictated the day before. In the chancellor's absence, the dean took his place in the administration of affairs at the college.

The Hall of Languages was in possession of the janitor and his force, all students, who were sweeping and scrubbing to the accompaniment of song and joke and argument.

As she entered the office the registrar turned from the window, where he had been standing thoughtfully, his hands in the pockets of his trousers—the patched ones.

"Good-morning, Miss Lowe. What can I do for you?" he asked pleasantly, but Winifred noticed that the shadows beneath his eyes had deepened during the last few days.

"Nothing for me, Mr. Burke," she answered impulsively, "but I should like to do something for you."

"For me?" The registrar took his hands out of his pockets, and added quickly, "The ring?"

"Our cook asked," Winifred began directly, "if you had considered the possibility of mice or rats carrying it off."

MICE AND MEN

"No, I haven't thought of such a thing." The registrar's gaze began to search the floor vaguely. "I have felt so sure that Newsy stole it that my ideas did not compass rats."

"It wouldn't do any harm ——" began Winifred and paused.

The registrar caught her meaning. "Indeed, no. I'll have the janitor in." He stepped into the hall and called, "Lindsey, here, Lindsey!"

"Of course," he said coming back into the office, "I have questioned the janitor, and all the boys who work around the building. At first I thought it might have been pushed off the counter and picked up when the office was cleaned."

"Or thrown into the waste basket," suggested Winifred.

"No, that doesn't seem reasonable, because the envelope would have attracted attention. It was a long stiff brown one, I recall—and sealed. And on the outside I noted its contents. No," positively, "it wouldn't have been put among the waste paper unnoticed."

The janitor responded promptly to his summons, and before him the registrar laid Mrs. Betts' proposition.

"Rats? Well, I should say so!" Lindsey leaned against the counter. "And mice? Some! We're fighting 'em continually. Got a dozen traps

A JUNIOR CO-ED

set in the cellar now. Mice nests? Of course. Wait. I'll call Howells in. He attends to this office."

Howells was the boy whom Mrs. Betts had ousted from the Alpha Gamma House and who was about to leave college. He frowned when his hall work was interrupted, and frowned again at the sight of Winifred who, as house stewardess, had allowed him to be ousted.

"Mice here?—yes," Howells informed them, "lots of mice. I plugged up a mouse hole under the corner desk the last time we moved it out to clean."

"And when was that?" asked the registrar eagerly.

Howells considered. "About three weeks ago."

"Let's unplug the hole," pleaded Winifred, "and see if there's a nest under it."

Howells backed rapidly toward the door. "The nest isn't usually within gunshot of the hole," he protested, adding in a mumble to the janitor, "I must get busy in the hall now, anyway."

But the registrar retained the janitor with a gesture. "We'll investigate that hole," he said with quiet determination, "and any others in this room. I don't propose to leave any stone unturned. That ring must be found." There was a note of desperation in the registrar's voice.

MICE AND MEN

Together the two men pulled the heavy desk away from the wall and discovered, amid a collection of dust, bits of paper and débris, a piece of tin nailed to a floor board. Securing a hammer, the janitor removed the tin and uncovered a very small hole. But the hole held no revelations.

"Might as well be thorough," announced the janitor, and folding the rug back he ripped the board up.

"There's a nest!" cried Winifred, and pounced on a heap of chewed papers, cloth and threads of matting which a mother mouse had collected on a joist. The babies were grown and away, however, but Winifred and the registrar, taking the nest apart bit by bit, found only white paper or pieces of newspapers from the waste paper basket.

"Not a sign of a brown envelope," exclaimed Winifred finally in a disappointed tone.

But the registrar was not ready to give up the search. With the janitor's help, he pushed the heavy furniture aside, took up the rug and examined every inch of space in the room without, however, discovering another mouse hole. But, under every piece of furniture and behind the heap of catalogues, they found fresh evidences of the recent presence of the small intruders.

"They must come in from the hall," explained the janitor. "It's the only way they can get in

A JUNIOR CO-ED

now with that hole stopped up, and no others around the place."

Winifred was ransacking the tiny closet, bringing a microscopic gaze to bear on the floor.

"Anything here?" asked the registrar, appearing at the door.

Winifred arose from her knees shaking her head.

"Not a sign of a place where a mouse can get in, but several places where one has tried to get out," and she pointed to the gnawed spots beneath the small porcelain wash-basin, where the waste pipe penetrated the floor.

"They come in from the hall," repeated the janitor with conviction, "when the door is open, and then get shut in here and try to get out. Next day they escape when the door is open again."

The explanation seemed sensible and sufficient, and Winifred went back to the chancellor's office, disappointed at the failure of Mrs. Betts' theory.

CHAPTER XVI

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

IT was four o'clock in the afternoon, that hour of rest between the completion of Mrs. Betts' work after lunch and the beginning of her labors before dinner. The kitchen was "red up" in accordance with her most exact ideas, and Mrs. Betts herself sat beneath Druisy's cage with Pete on her lap.

Her face did not wear its wonted expression of calm and humorous good nature, however, but a sad and troubled look. For several mornings after Newsy's disappearance, when Army Blue appeared to shake the furnace, she had remarked buoyantly: "Before night I expect to see Newsy walk into this room."

But, as day after day passed without the doorway being darkened by his childish figure, she lost hope, and her tone lost its buoyant note, until that morning she had sighed despondently to Winifred: "I don't think now that he'll ever come. He wrote we wouldn't see him any more, and I guess he told the truth. But I expected he'd get so homesick for a sight of us all that he'd come back in spite of his fear of bein' caught."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Therefore, all day, Mrs. Betts had gone about her work in somber silence.

"The kitchen feels exactly like a church," Janet complained to Lillian. "Why, Mis' Betts peels potatoes even as if she was fixing 'em for a funeral! I never see the equal of it in 'er! I'm glad it's my day to clean the parlors, so I can keep out of sight of 'er."

But although at three o'clock Janet was dusting industriously but lingeringly in the front of the house, Mrs. Betts was not sitting alone in the kitchen. Winifred occupied the footstool at her feet soothing Pete, whose feelings were ruffled by the dropping seeds which Druisy threw out of its cage in playful mood, pausing occasionally to sing. Druisy's song was the only cheerful sound in the kitchen.

In front of the sink stood a figure resembling a huge grizzly bear. It was Moses Carter, encased in his gray fur coat. With an eye ever open to appearances, Moses had chosen a gray fur in order to match his span of iron-gray horses. His carriage was upholstered in gray for the same reason, and the great fur robe which covered the knees of himself and his driver was likewise gray. The only concession to appearances which his driver would make was a gray cap. The man, to Moses' disgust, insisted on wearing a black overcoat.

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

Mr. Carter's fur cap hung on one end of the sink, while his great driving gloves had been cast despondently on the floor. Between his hands he twisted a green-bordered silk handkerchief as nervously as a woman.

The cause of his agitation was the unusual somberness of Mrs. Betts' face, which to Moses indicated a crisis of tears. He held his soft silk handkerchief in readiness for such a calamity, the while he furtively measured the distance to the door and noted that the way thereto was broad and unobstructed, his vague intentions being to add his handkerchief to the crisis, but subtract his presence.

Outside, at regular intervals, sounded the rapid beat of horses' hoofs. The hoofs belonged to Mr. Carter's grays, but, owing to the stress of feeling inside the kitchen, he did not even hear the music made by their feet.

Mrs. Betts had pressed her future husband into the hunt for Newsy, in which work he was about as efficient as the proverbial bull in the china closet. He had notified the chief of police, only to find that that official had been notified twice before. He had talked with a reporter on the *Huntingdon News* and caused an account of the whole affair to be given prominence in that paper, whereas, owing to the united efforts of Landon and

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the registrar, all publicity had heretofore been carefully avoided because Newsy read the papers, and it was every one's opinion that the child must be somewhere about the city. He was too young and penniless to wander far.

Next, Mr. Carter had interviewed Newsy's aunt, and frightened her out of two days' work over the wash-tub by giving her the impression that he firmly believed in Newsy's guilt, and was bent on finding and sending him to the House of Correction, which, as the aunt well knew, did not correct.

Having thus with great zeal and indiscretion done all the damage he was able to do in the matter, he rested, reported to Mrs. Betts and quite meekly awaited her verdict.

Mrs. Betts neither commended nor condemned. She smoothed Pete's back until he disregarded the flying bird seeds and asked suggestively :

"Ain't there a set of men that's made just t' find out things? What's a de-tective for? Ain't there none in this city?"

"I presume," said Winifred quickly, "that the registrar has a detective at work. I don't know, of course, but Landon thinks he has."

Mr. Carter swelled up like a toad and then collapsed in one loud, prolonged and scornful, "P-o-o-f! Detectives!"

He unbuttoned his coat, the better to relieve his

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

overcharged feelings, and took the subject in hand with alacrity. "Made t' find things out, do ye think? Well, they ain't. I can't tell you what they was made for, except to rake in money. I'll prove it. Once I had a colt stolen. Took out of the horse barn in the night. Lock was picked."

Mr. Carter began in brief numbers owing to the fact that Mrs. Betts' attention seemed to wander. But finding an appreciative listener in Winifred his tone became fuller and his sentences lengthened.

"I went after a detective. Picked out the likeliest lookin' feller in the bunch at the agency, and told him to go after that colt and get it back regardless, because that colt was valuable, you understand. Well, that detective he started in. Said he must collect a few workin' facts. He traveled a few thousand miles more or less to collect 'em. He kept the trolley busy carryin' him back and forth between town and Cartersville to ask questions of my hired man. He talked enough to run a presidential campaign. He was the biggest gas-bag I ever see. I told 'im one day not to get too near the fireplace or I was afraid he'd blow up! Well, he done nothing but talk and run up a bill until that colt had time to grow up and change its color and die of old age. Finally I see that the bill was goin' to amount t' more than the colt would bring and I called 'im off and took a hand in the job

A JUNIOR CO-ED

myself." Mr. Carter had warmed to his subject forgetful of Newsy, and was enjoying himself. "And," triumphantly, "where d' you think I found that colt?"

"Where, Mr. Carter?" Winifred leaned forward eagerly. "I am anxious to know."

Even Mrs. Betts looked up with a faint-hearted, "Where?"

Mr. Carter beamed. He sat on the edge of the sink and crossed his feet, approaching the answer to his own question indirectly.

"If that colt had been a snake the detective would ha' been pisened a dozen times, and if it had been a polecat we never could ha' stayed in Cartersville. For one of my hired men had stole it and rented that old ramshackle house at the end of the trolley line, and was keeping it in the kitchen. Detectives?" Mr. Carter waved a hand dramatically. "Don't ever say 'detective' t' me! I've had my fill of 'em. They're all right in stories—always gittin' folks out of messes there, but right here in Huntingdon they make the mess worse. Any of these college boys could do better. Why, as for me, I ruther ——"

Here Mrs. Betts, who had been waiting patiently for some time to speak, waited no longer. In a voice which banished Mr. Carter's soaring spirits she interrupted:

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

"But I want that boy Newsy to—to live with me."

Mr. Carter, apprehensive of the crisis, gasped. He stuffed his handkerchief into his pocket, instantly pulling it out again. He looked it over nervously and then wadding it into a tight ball, mopped his forehead, exclaiming earnestly :

"We can find another boy, Sairy, that will fit into that corner room. There's lots of 'em. I'll—I'll hunt one up to-day."

The ghost of a smile crept into Mrs. Betts' eyes, and her voice became unmistakably firm. "Don't you go to hunt-ing out any other boy, Moses. I want Newsy—just that boy Newsy."

"I'd give a farm, Sairy Mary, to bring him back," Mr. Carter declared fervently. "I'd give—yes—I'd give one of the blooded colts."

Recognizing this as the acme of self-sacrifice on the part of her future husband, Sairy Mary's face softened and her eyes expressed approval, where-upon Mr. Carter's spirits expanded.

Mr. Carter was a human thermometer in the presence of Mrs. Betts, so fearful was he that, being a woman, she might unexpectedly change her mind on a certain vital subject.

On the walk outside the door sounded measured, substantial footsteps, one step the counterpart of another. Simultaneously, through the butler's

A JUNIOR CO-ED

pantry, flew feet that did not take two steps alike, and with the simultaneous opening of the outer and the pantry door, Army Blue and Lillian faced each other, the latter's speech already under headway.

"I do believe you are discussing Newsy," she cried, nodding to each of the occupants of the kitchen in turn without interrupting the flow of her discourse. "I'm sorry, but I've nothing to add—though I tried to have. I have just come down from the registrar's office, that is, a little while ago." Lillian haunted that office now as persistently as she had avoided it before. "I went up to ask him if he hadn't heard from Newsy to-day. He said, 'No, not a word,' and then his mouth shut up with a sound just like papa's purse clasp makes after he has given me all the money he intends to."

Mr. Carter frowned heavily. He buttoned up his coat and folded his arms tightly across his chest. The sight of Lillian always moved him to sarcastic thoughts if not words.

"Gives 'er money to get rid of 'er," he muttered under his breath, referring to Lillian's parent.

Lillian, unmindful of the mutter, seated herself on the broad window sill beside Mrs. Betts and continued breathlessly, "I don't know what the registrar is doing to find Newsy, but whatever

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

it is it's not the right thing, I know," logically. "Otherwise he'd be found." Then without a pause she added vehemently, "I hate diamonds. I shall never want to see one again, unless," prudently, "my ring comes back to me."

"Mrs. Betts," called the chaperon's voice from the dining-room, and depositing Pete in Winifred's lap, Mrs. Betts answered the call.

"I wish somebody would do something," insisted Lillian.

"What?" asked Army Blue.

Lillian put both hands in a defensive attitude. "Of course, I don't know what, or else I should go and do it," she cried in a surprised tone. "But there are so many men around that are interested that I can't understand why Newsy hasn't appeared. If I were a man I know I should know just what to do."

"Oh, you would, would you?" asked Moses Carter, grimly taking himself into his folded arms with a tighter grip. "Huh-huh—would, would you?"

Army Blue smiled. He had taken off his overcoat, and was working toward the cellar door. The day was unseasonably cold, and he had come in "between-times," as Mrs. Betts said, to attend to the furnace.

"There are enough men who would do some-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

thing if they only knew what to do," he replied quickly.

"I presume," said Winifred slowly, "that everything is being done that can be, although ——" she paused.

"You are not any better satisfied than I am," accused Lillian spiritedly, "only you are slower about saying it! Hasn't Landon found out yet where Newsy bought his new clothes?"

Winifred shook her head.

Mr. Carter, unfolding an arm, wagged a forefinger oracularly and spoke in a low tone, his eyes wandering toward the door out of which Mrs. Betts had disappeared.

"If that boy Newsy had been some fifteen years older," impressively, "I should say, 'Look out for some girl 'r other that wants a ring which he can't afford to get!'" Mr. Carter closed one eye in a wink of approval at his own discernment.

Army Blue, who, despite Lillian's presence, had been studying the floor, a crease of perplexity furrowing his brow, looked up suddenly with a gleam of intelligence in his eyes. Once he opened his lips, but, on second thought, closed them again.

"You thought of something," declared Lillian quickly. "What was it?"

Army Blue shook his head. "Nothing worthy of mention. My ideas in this matter haven't

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

amounted to a cent's worth, although," he hesitated and glanced at Winifred, "I think no one, unless it's Mrs. Betts, wants Newsy found any more than I do."

Winifred nodded slightly. She remembered that Sayles Cooper had a "debt" to repay the child in connection with that memorable evening when the ring had been given as security. Then she bethought her of the night of the party. She had not talked with Army Blue since, and so full had her thoughts been of Newsy and the ring that she had forgotten the freshman's discovery, whatever it was, in the inner pocket of the black coat.

"Is Miss Lowe out in the kitchen?" asked Janet's voice in the dining-room, and Winifred promptly called, "Yes, she is!"

The maid appeared bearing a card at which Winifred scarcely glanced before exclaiming:

"Please tell him to come right out here, Janet, if he has anything to tell us about Newsy!"

He appeared just as Mrs. Betts had reseated herself under the bird cage and Pete, having spurned Winifred's arms, was creeping back into his mistress' lap.

"Yes, I've something to tell about Newsy," proclaimed Landon bringing with him a whiff of frost and snow. His voice was bluff and hearty. "I've satisfied myself that he never saw that ring ——"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Don't put the cart be-fore the horse," adjured Mrs. Betts, "but tell us why you think so."

"Tell us the whole story," cried Lillian, who loved stories, "and don't leave out one bit!"

Landon shook hands cordially with Mr. Carter, and sat down on a corner of the table. Army Blue backed up against the cellar door, the furnace forgotten. Lillian hovered near Mrs. Betts, too excited to remain seated.

"You know," began Landon, "that I have been trying to find out where the little chap bought those clothes. His actions in connection with them sort of gave me the only chill I've had in this matter, he was so unlike himself. Well, I have hunted this town over from one end to the other, and not run on the solution to the clothes business until to-day. To-day I found out."

Landon paused to sneeze. Lillian raised on the tips of her toes and balanced herself, her hands outspread on either side like a balancing pole, her face flushed with anxiety, utterly unconscious of her pose.

"To-day," continued Landon, "I found a little second-hand clothing shop kept by a man named Levy."

"Not so fast," cried Lillian. Lillian loved suspense. "How came you to find it?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot to give you that part. That

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

came through Newsy's aunt. Guess I've made her a little social call every day since Newsy disappeared. But she's not been able to help me any until this morning. This morning I found her wrestling with a dun from this same Levy. It was addressed to Newsy, and the aunt didn't understand it. Of course, I knew in a minute what was up, and I made tracks for Levy's place of business, I tell you. There I found that Newsy had bought second-hand things, nearly new, on the installment plan. He had paid over only three dollars on 'em at first. It was all the money he had, Levy said."

"That shows," cried Winifred, "that he had neither money nor ring. Of course he didn't take that ring."

"Haven't I said that from the first?" asked Lillian in a tone of amazement that any one could have had a moment's doubt on a question she had so satisfactorily settled.

Landon awaited a further hearing patiently, and when a pause occurred, he promptly took up the thread of his story.

"But that's not all I learned. Levy said the little fellow was bound to have the clothes, but hated to get 'em before he could pay for them. And, finally, he told Levy that he had promised Mr. Dansbury he wouldn't buy anything that he

A JUNIOR CO-ED

couldn't pay for on the spot, and Levy said that the promise had evidently made such an impression on Newsy that he couldn't enjoy his new togs when he got into 'em."

"That accounts for—for everything queer in Newsy's actions about those clothes," Winifred exclaimed. "He acted so ashamed of them or regretful—as though he had no right to them."

Landon nodded. "He told Levy that Mr. Dansbury would never want him for a pard, because he had gone back on his word—and on Mr. Dansbury's advice."

"If he felt that way," mused Lillian, suddenly thoughtful, "I wonder why he got the clothes?"

Again Army Blue glanced up with something unsaid sparkling in his eyes. He smiled faintly as he looked quizzically at Moses Carter, but that gentleman, totally unconscious that he had inspired any one with an idea, was gazing at Landon in open admiration.

"I don't know," Landon answered Lillian; "I can't even guess, because he—he didn't exactly need those clothes. But I found out enough from Levy to convince me that Newsy is no thief."

Suddenly Moses Carter strode across the room and dealt Landon a mighty blow between the shoulders. "Young man, you've found out more in a day than the hull detective bureau would

NEWSY'S CLOTHES

have gathered in this winter! Go it now and find where that boy is, and bring 'im back t' Mis' Betts here, and I'll give ye one of my blooded colts."

Mr. Carter was laboring under great excitement, attendant on the moisture which was gathering in Mrs. Betts' eyes.

Landon caught his breath with difficulty as it was being driven from his body, and gave an embarrassed laugh. "I—why, thank you, Mr. Carter, I don't want a blooded colt," he stammered. "In the first place, I wouldn't know what to do with it ——"

"Drive it!" yelled Mr. Carter. "Drive it! It's a fast one. It's blooded. It's valuable."

"I don't doubt that," laughed Landon ruefully. "But there's no danger that I shall earn it, as the earth seems to have opened and swallowed up Newsy."

Mrs. Betts gave an audible sniff which increased Mr. Carter's anguish, likewise his generosity. "Any one that'll bring the boy back," he vowed, "shall take one of them colts whether or no! He shall have his choice; and they ain't no mean choice, if I do say it as shouldn't. It ain't often you see colts like them on the streets of this city. They're trotters, I say, and blooded, and they can go! I'll have 'em broke by the time that boy

A JUNIOR CO-ED

comes to light, and the one that brings 'im shall have one of 'em, and he shall have the other, as well as the corner bedroom with electricity and hot 'n' cold water put in regardless."

Suddenly Mr. Carter's emotional monologue suffered an interruption from the head of the back stairs.

"Lillian Antwerp," came an indignant voice, "are you going to be all day getting Winifred up here?"

Lillian clapped her hand over her mouth like a guilty child. "Winifred, the girls sent me down here to tell you they want you up in Erma's room. They are writing that letter about M. Gussie's scholarship."

The little company in the kitchen dispersed uncheerfully. Janet arrived to help Mrs. Betts with the dinner. Army Blue disappeared down the cellar stairs. Landon remembered an engagement down-town and accepted Mr. Carter's offer to give him a "boost" down behind those matchless grays.

CHAPTER XVII

A RAT-HOLE

"WHAT day is to-day?" asked Rebecca Bicknell suddenly at the dinner table.

"The day immediately following yesterday," replied Punch.

"A week and a day after our stone-house party," added Flossie Rogers. "It seems a year, though, with all the happenings since."

"I'm asking for information——" began Rebecca irritably.

"I shall be explicit, Reb," soothed Adelaide Prell. "It's bargain day in the Huntingdon stores, as I know to my sorrow——"

"Oh!—Friday." Rebecca lapsed into thought, staring fixedly at the jabot which adorned the front of Adelaide's shirt-waist.

The latter lifted a shielding hand in front of the jabot. "Please don't look a hole through it, Reb. This is my bargain, and I find it's worth its greatly reduced price—and no more!"

"I'm not looking at anything in particular," muttered Rebecca, transferring her gaze to Adelaide's face.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Thank you." Adelaide bowed with dignity.

"I'm thinking," Rebecca explained.

"What?"

"If to-day is Friday, Mr. Perry will receive our letter before Sunday."

"I think it will make good Sabbath reading," primly from Lillian.

"If he can read it at all," Punch cut in. "Erma was not on hand with her elegant chirography, Winifred was not adjacent to a typewriter, and I was not asked to preside at the pen!"

"Yes, you!" retorted Marguerite, who had written the letter. "Didn't your father request you to dictate your home letters hereafter?"

Punch nodded carelessly. "Yes, but father has been having dyspepsia lately, and it has upset his nervous system."

"If dyspepsia hadn't, a continued course of your penmanship would have!" retorted Marguerite.

"He will get the letter to-morrow." Rebecca was wandering on unheeding of the voices which filled her ears, but not her understanding. "I can't help being awfully glad that letter is written."

"We did just the decent thing in writing it," declared Adelaide.

"Why, Adelaide Prell! You were the one who held out the longest against it!" Lillian opened her eyes wide in surprise. There were not many

A RAT-HOLE

things hidden which should have been revealed in the chapter house life with its close intimacies.

Adelaide flushed and tossed her head. "I did not want to take so important a step without thinking it over thoroughly," she answered shortly, "and without consulting the *alumnæ*."

There was a glint of resentment in Marguerite Southy's eyes as she hastened to the support of her sister senior.

"We have all been working for the honor of being first in the scholarship, and to yield that honor without thoroughly considering the matter would have been folly—especially since M. Gussie has thrown away her chance!"

"Given it away!" corrected half a dozen voices at once, with an emphasis which caused a constrained silence to follow, until Lillian broke it with a solemn:

"My conscience would have kept me awake nights if we had not done just as we have."

Instantly her roommate raised a pleading voice. "Please, somebody, help me to keep Lillian's conscience stirred up then, as a preventative of snoring!"

Every one laughed, and the chill in the atmosphere was dissolved.

It had taken the majority of the girls seven days to forgive M. Gussie for refusing their invitation,

A JUNIOR CO-ED

and not until they had forgiven her, was it possible for them to appreciate thoroughly her noble and unselfish action in joining weak little Theta. With the appreciation came the willingness to act on a plan which had been formulated by several of the girls simultaneously, although the idea originated with Winifred, the plan of omitting to make a report of Moses Carter's gift to the editor of the college Weekly and of stating the facts in the case to the president of the board of trustees.

Once that week M. Gussie had asked Winifred if the promised scholarship was yet forthcoming.

"I have my editorial all written ready to send to the printer's at a moment's notice," she smiled. "It's my best effort, and I'm anxious to inflict it on the public in the next issue."

"The public must wait," Winifred had evaded laughingly. "That editorial cannot see the light of the printed page next week."

Gussie's face fell. "I thought you expected the money right after Thanksgiving?"

"To expect and to receive are two different things," Winifred had made answer gravely, and the matter was dropped by Gussie's saying in a sympathetic tone:

"I'm awfully sorry you have been disappointed."

Saturday morning, as usual, Winifred went early to the Hill to work in the chancellor's office. As

A RAT-HOLE

usual, also, the halls and offices, except the chancellor's, were in possession of the janitor and his cleaning force, among them Army Blue, his blue clothes completely concealed by overalls and jacket of denim.

It was Army Blue's first day among the cleaners, Howells having left college the day before.

Winifred met him in front of the registrar's door, and the boy beamed at her as though he had fallen heir to a burden of money rather than a burden of work. He bore a new broom and a dust-pan.

"'A new broom sweeps clean,'" she quoted.

Army Blue lowered his voice and nodded toward the registrar's room. "The old broom certainly didn't! That room is a sight, in the corners especially. Guess Howells must have used the carpet-sweeper and overlooked the broom entirely."

"I think that Mr. Howells never looked at a piece of work which it was possible for him to overlook," retorted Winifred disappearing into the chancellor's office.

She had just seated herself at the typewriter, when Army Blue tapped on the door and opening it far enough to admit his head said, "Pardon me, Miss Lowe, but do you remember that I want to talk with you when we both find time? I spoke to you about it the night of the party."

"Yes, I remember."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"I tried to see you that evening, but couldn't, and all the week I have been too busy. I want to ask your advice."

"What about this afternoon?" asked Winifred briskly. "I can talk with you then."

Army Blue shook his head. "I have booked this afternoon for"—he hesitated—"for a—well, a little expedition of my own. But this evening——"

The color mounted slowly to Winifred's cheeks. There was Landon! "No, not this evening. I have an engagement."

"All right," cheerfully. "I'll bide my time. Monday, perhaps. No rush," and he was soon making the dust fly in the registrar's office.

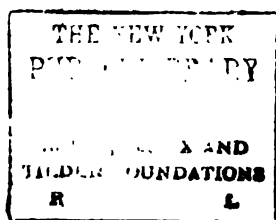
For an hour Winifred worked steadily, while the noises of cleaning waxed and waned in the halls, together with the tramping of feet and the sound of voices, whistles and calls. Then she experienced an unexpected interruption which caused her to start and bring her hands down with a bang on the keyboard of the machine.

The door leading to the registrar's office was thrown violently open and Army Blue bolted unceremoniously into the room shouting as though she were a long way off, "Miss Lowe! I say—Miss Lowe!"

His face was red and perspiring. His blue



"ISN'T THIS IT?"



A RAT-HOLE

denim was gray with dust, while behind him a cloud of dust obscured the landscape in the registrar's office and drifted in at the open door unheeded by the agitated sweeper.

Covering the distance to her desk in a couple of long strides, he demanded in an excited voice: "Isn't this it?"

He held out before her astonished eyes a long brown envelope with a hole gnawed through both sides at the point of the sealed flap, and a smaller hole in one side only, near the end.

She sprang to her feet and reached out an eager hand. "It's the identical—where did you find it?" Her words tumbled over each other as she viewed his discovery. "Yes—listen—here in the registrar's writing is, 'Miss Antwerp's ring, as security for ——' and the hole goes right through the remaining words."

"If only the ring were ——" Army Blue was beginning, when a tense voice behind him startled them both.

"The ring, did you say? What about it? Have you found it?"

The registrar appeared in a cloud of dust in the doorway of his office. He had come up on the Hill for a paper which he had forgotten the evening before, and arrived just in time to see the lost envelope in Winifred's hands—the brown envelope

A JUNIOR CO-ED

which had caused him anxious days and sleepless nights for a week.

"The ring," he gasped again hurrying into the room. "Have you found it? Is that it?"

Winifred regretfully held out the paper shell. "It's not the ring—I wish it were—it's only the envelope."

The registrar took it in hands which shook. "Where did you find it?" he asked thickly without looking up. His lips twitched.

"Come here," answered Army Blue. "I'll show you."

He led the way through the rooms to the door of the little closet opening into the registrar's office.

"It covered a rat-hole!" he explained.

"A rat-hole!" cried the registrar. "The janitor and I have gone over every inch of this room—yes, and the closet too—and found no rat-holes. Where ——"

Without a word, Army Blue dropped on his knees, and taking the envelope, slipped it back of a drain pipe until it disappeared wholly from the eye, no matter what the position of the observer.

"The trouble is," he began, "the hole can't be seen at all. It can only be felt."

Down on his knees beside the boy went the registrar. "You're right. We thought we looked

A RAT-HOLE

everywhere—the janitor and I did—but we never thought of poking up in here.”

“It was a dirty ceiling that led me to find it,” continued Army Blue. “I was scrubbing here—the boards are so grimy—and when I pushed the cloth up behind the pipe I found the envelope, and right back of it the hole.”

The registrar, trembling with excitement, investigated. “The hole is there beyond a doubt—and perhaps the ring——” He sat back on his heels and looked at the envelope.

Suddenly he glanced up with a single word of inquiry: “Newsy?”

Army Blue nodded. “I think, sir, that this lets Newsy out for good. In the first place, if he had taken the ring he would not have stopped to get it out of the envelope—he would have taken this along. In the second place, you can see that the envelope has not been opened except as the rat gnawed it. The flap is still sealed, and the ends are untornd.”

The registrar pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his brow. “You are right,” he said slowly, gradually gaining control of himself. “That lets the boy out, certainly. I can see that the only openings have been made by the rat.”

For a moment no one spoke. Army Blue was intently studying the envelope which the reg-

A JUNIOR CO-ED

istrar held. The registrar was looking at the lavatory.

"The ring," the latter began slowly, "may be two stories down in the wall."

Army Blue leaned forward and pointed to the smaller hole near the end of the envelope.

"The ring must have been liberated in this room," he said with conviction. "I think it's not in the wall. See here."

The registrar stared down uncomprehendingly.

"I think the diamond lay under this spot when the rat found it," explained Army Blue. "He gnawed through the paper over the diamond, but finding the ring would add nothing to his nest he let it go, and then carried the envelope up the wall and got it wedged behind the pipe over his hole. Now, see? The little thief had to make an opening here then, right through both sides, in order to get inside the wall."

"I'm sure you are right!" cried Winifred impulsively.

"Yes—I think you're right," echoed the registrar, slowly. "Still—there's hope—a forlorn hope—in the wall."

A few moments later when Winifred started for the chapter house, she left the janitor and half his force tearing away the wall in a vain pursuit of the forlorn hope.

A RAT-HOLE

Lillian received the envelope and the news while seated on the floor of her room, toasting her feet in front of the hot-air register. The room was occupied also by all the other girls who chanced to be in the house at the time, and who gathered to discuss the situation.

"My ring is gone forever," mourned Lillian, laying the envelope on the floor and gazing at it pensively. "I wonder how many trousers the registrar will have to have patched in consequence? I believe I'm going to cry. I feel exactly like tears!"

Her roommate giggled softly.

Suddenly Lillian's eyes lighted. Her face brightened. She scrambled to her feet and crossed the room bearing the mutilated envelope. Removing a Cornell pennant from the crowded wall she placed the rat-gnawed trophy in the space vacated.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly, stepping back; "not many girls can number a six-hundred dollar hole among their souvenirs. Who was it that said, 'There's no great gain without some small loss'?"

Winifred raised her voice above the laughter. "It's right the other way around, Lillian, 'There's no great loss without some small gain.'"

Lillian looked aggrieved. "Well, I put in all the words, didn't I? What's the difference?"

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Then, gluing her eyes again on the envelope, she murmured abstractedly, "It was the flap on the other side that the registrar licked!"

When Winifred went to her room a few moments later, Lillian followed, curling up cozily in the big chair. "Isn't it queer, Winifred, that Army Blue should have found the envelope that held the ring that was given as security to keep him in college? Isn't it exactly like the house that Jack built?"

"It certainly is," Winifred responded, "only that house had an end to its building, and this seems to have none."

"Army Blue called on me last evening." Lillian unexpectedly changed the subject with a sunny smile. "Did you know that?"

Winifred answered the smile. "I heard of it; and heard, also, that for the first time in your history you did not keep a caller waiting."

Lillian laughed. "Chum must have told that to every girl in the hall the moment I was out of sight. She hasn't recovered from the shock of it yet. I left her standing in the middle of the floor saying, 'Did I ever see the equal of this! Did I ever see the equal of this!' It was such fun to hear her that I wished I had done that way before!"

Winifred did not see Army Blue again until Monday. In the late afternoon as she came down

A RAT-HOLE

alone from the Hill she was thinking of him and wondering whether he would call on her that evening as he had mentioned doing.

"I confess," she thought, mounting the chapter house steps, "that I am curious now to know what he found in the pocket of Mr. Stearns' coat."

As she turned the knob of the vestibule door on the outside, it was turned on the other side, and she met Army Blue on the threshold.

"Why—you are going away!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"For a few days only," he returned.

His general appearance indicated a journey. He wore the black suit, the gray cap and overcoat and carried in his hand a small shabby hand-bag. Added to this equipment was a general air of determination.

"For a few days?" repeated Winifred inquiringly, following as he backed through the vestibule into the hall.

"I am going to New York in search of Newsy."

Winifred looked her astonishment. "New York—Newsy? Do you know where Newsy is?"

"I know he is in New York selling papers—that's all. I'm going after him."

"How——" Winifred began and stopped.

"I came up to tell you that—and other things."

"Come into the library and tell me now."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Army Blue shook his head, pulling from his vest pocket a very large and ancient silver watch which had literally been "through the war"—and revealed the fact in its battered case. It was attached to a buttonhole in his vest with a piece of shoestring.

"There's no time now. I waited for you as long as I dared. Mrs. Betts will tell you ——"

"But I want to know right now," insisted Winifred. "Why do you go to New York? Why do you think Newsy is there?"

Army Blue laughed. "I can explain in a minute," he said. "Do you recall what Mr. Carter said in the kitchen the other day about a 'girl in the case'?"

Winifred nodded.

"That gave me my idea. I remember when I was nine, and—I remember that nine-years-old can wish to appear well before some other child just as intensely as though he were twenty-nine—and that would explain the getting of those clothes."

"Yes, yes," cried Winifred eagerly.

"I followed up the idea Saturday afternoon, and found the girl in the case, a little thing with yellow hair, about Newsy's age. She sat behind him at school. He was planning to bestow all his worldly goods on her later in life."

Winifred laughed. "How did you find her?"

A RAT-HOLE

"I went to Newsy's aunt first, and asked her who Newsy's playmates were, but she could not tell me. It's evident that his aunt knows no more about him than I do. When I left her I thought of his teacher, and went back to ask who she was. That the aunt knew, and I went over to school number three and found Miss Keeler in her room. She told me of Newsy's devotion to Nina McLaw, and gave me the child's address. And to make a long story short, as I must do, Nina finally produced a letter from Newsy, a scrawl which gave no address but said he was 'well and hoped she was the same,' and told that he was selling papers in New York."

Again Army Blue consulted his watch. "Finding out this much settles the question I have wanted for a week to talk over with you. At the party the other night while I was hunting for a pencil I found an inside pocket in this coat that I had not found before, and pulled out a fifty dollar bill. I wanted to ask you what I ought to do with it. It doesn't belong to me. I can't return it, because I don't know where to send it. I can't use it on myself—that would not be right. Then this matter of Newsy came up, and I knew I did not need to ask you. It is right to use it to bring him back—I owe Newsy the effort also—but I must go if I am to catch the train."

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Winifred followed him out on the piazza. "It will be like hunting for a 'needle in a haystack,'" she protested hastily, "to search New York for that child."

Army Blue paused on the steps and looked back smiling.

"Mrs. Betts is so firm in the belief that I'll find him that she sent him a dozen sugar cookies." He raised the shabby hand-bag. "I have 'em here."

The whirl of an approaching car caused him to spring down the steps, exclaiming hastily, "I have a plan of search. It may not work, but if it doesn't I have mistaken my man."

His voice rang with confidence, as, raising his cap, he dashed up College Road, and sprang aboard a moving car.

But Winifred did not stop to witness this acrobatic feat. She ran through the house, bursting into the kitchen with an excited "Mrs. Betts, what is Sayles Cooper's plan for finding Newsy? Whom does he think will aid him?"

Mrs. Betts stood beside the stove, on which was an appalling array of pots and pans all steaming. She pulled the cover off a kettle nervously, stirred the contents, and put the cover on another kettle where no cover was needed.

"Law, child, I don't know! I'm that upset I can't re-call whether he said Newsy was in New

A RAT-HOLE

York or Buf-falo, or whether he's going af-ter him or go-in' to get Moses Carter—he was in a hurry and I was that up-set over the idea of New-sy's bein' found ! ”

Here Mrs. Betts jerked a pan off the stove, turned to the sink, hesitated, and returned the pan to its place on the stove again.

“ Only one thing I re-mem-ber, and that is ”—there was secret pride in her tone—“ the boy got his idea from some-thing that Moses said.”

Seeing that Mrs. Betts was incapable of giving her reliable information, Winifred resorted to the telephone to relieve her own overcharged feelings, calling up Landon Stearns.

“ See here, Winifred,” interrupted that young man craftily when she had been speaking a moment, “ I can't half get that over the wire. I'll drop in this evening and hear —— ”

Winifred suppressed a laugh. “ No, you won't ! ” she returned promptly ; “ so you listen sharply while I tell you all I know about it.”

“ Go ahead then,” said Landon in a chagrined but resigned tone. “ But naturally I'm anxious to get it straight what that chap's doing, because he is wearing the Psi Upsilon colors to-day.”

“ Is he really, Landon ? ” cried Winifred, her interest in her own news momentarily swallowed up in this statement. “ When did that happen ? ”

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"We voted him in Friday night, and pinned the colors on him Saturday noon—the rascal!" good-naturedly. "Why didn't he report his movements here instead of at the Alpha Gamma House? But go on! I want to know what those movements are."

When Winifred reached the fifty dollar bill, she was interrupted again.

"Fifty dollars? Good! That's one on father! He always has such a pocket made to carry a bill-book in. Well, he'll never miss the bill, and it's being put to capital use."

"Indeed it is," declared Winifred enthusiastically, "but, Landon—honestly now—you've been to New York loads of times—can he ever find Newsy?"

"I don't know—time will tell. Evidently from what you say he has some search-card up his sleeve that we know nothing of."

The time which "told" proved to be five days later.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM THE DUST

CHANCELLOR HAIGHT's tall gaunt figure with its slight stoop and careless grooming was once more a welcome sight on the Hill. He had returned from his Western tour in time to attend the mid-year meeting of the board of trustees, which was always held before the holiday vacation.

This meeting was scheduled for Monday, and the previous Friday the chancellor appeared unexpectedly in chapel, receiving a heart-warming reception from the students.

When Winifred and Lillian entered the auditorium together, the chancellor stood on the platform beside the desk, his shoulders raised, his head thrown back, a smile lighting his rugged face, and his whole attitude radiating a paternal pride in the animated scene before him. The students were standing, waving their handkerchiefs, and the great hall was ringing with the chorus of the favorite college song led by the chapel quartet :

“ Oh, Huntingdon, for thee,
May thy sons be leal and loyal
To thy memory.”

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Isn't it lovely to have him back?" exclaimed Lillian as the girls crowded into their seats. She spoke under cover of the cheers which succeeded the song.

"Indeed it is," agreed Winifred enthusiastically, "even if it does mean more work for me!"

"Of course," murmured Lillian—and her tone admitted no doubt on the subject—"the registrar has told him all about my ring and Newsy and everything by this time."

Winifred laughed without replying. To Lillian the events circling about that ring were the most important in the world at present, and the idea never occurred to her that other people were not as deeply interested in her affairs as she was—especially the masculine portion of creation.

At the close of chapel exercises Winifred waited to speak to the chancellor, and heard, at the close of his cordial greeting, exactly what she had expected to hear:

"Well, little girl, are you ready for more work?"

"I shall be ready at eleven o'clock," she replied promptly. "My last class ends then."

"Very well," smiled the chancellor; "I could keep three stenographers busy for the next few days, let alone two!"

All day she sat at one of the desks in the private

FROM THE DUST

office, not going down to the house, except for a hurried lunch, until six o'clock. And then, directly after dinner, the chancellor telephoned her asking if she would come up on the Hill Saturday morning at a much earlier hour than usual.

"There are some letters which I find it necessary to get off before the meeting of the endowment committee," he explained. "That meets at ten o'clock in order to be able to report at the general trustees' meeting Monday."

In obedience to this summons, shortly after breakfast the following morning, Winifred came down-stairs hatted and coated ready for the Hill. On her way through the hall she bethought her of some cranberries which Mrs. Betts had spoken of the day before.

"I must ask her if I shall order them," she exclaimed aloud, changing her course kitchen-wards.

Mrs. Betts stood beside the sink, with her back to the outside door. She was peeling turnips with slow and ponderous movements, her knot of hair hanging dejectedly over her left ear.

"I dreamed last night," she told Winifred disconsolately, "and although I ain't no believer in signs, this was so plain it makes me believe in it."

The knob of the outer door turned with a slow and stealthy motion which Mrs. Betts neither

A JUNIOR CO-ED

heard nor saw, so absorbed was she in turnips and dreams.

"I dream-ed," she went on, a tear falling on the turnip, "that Sayles Cooper walked all over the cit-y——"

The door creaked gently as it swung wide enough to admit a small worn cap above a little pinched face. Winifred gasped, but did not speak.

"And couldn't find Newsy no-wheres," finished Mrs. Betts.

"But I be found!" cried a joyful voice. "I've come back—and s'prised ye!"

The door flew wide open as, with a triumphant whoop, Newsy hopped over the threshold and flew straight into Mrs. Betts' arms. How she had time to turn around and stoop to the child's height between the time the door opened and he got himself across the floor, Winifred never knew. Mrs. Betts could be incredibly agile when she was so inclined, and this was one of the occasions.

"They found me—they did—and brung me back," Newsy explained, from the ample folds of her shirt-waist.

Two small ragged mittens frantically clasped her neck, and the high childish treble was interrupted by suspicious quavers which did not correspond with the boastful words.

"We come all the way back in the night—last

FROM THE DUST

night—and we had beds right on the car, one apiece, and I tell you they was fine 'n' clean 'n' as white as the ones looked like in yer new house. A darky he made 'em up out of jest the seats, like we was a-settin' on—it was awful funny."

Here Newsy extricated himself from Mrs. Betts' arms and stood forth on stout bold legs with his feet wide spread. Brushing away something damp from his cheek with a coat sleeve he sniffed loudly, explaining, "I got a cold som'ers or other, I guess. I've snuffed like this all the mornin'!"

Mrs. Betts sat down suddenly and laughed through her tears.

"Bless yer heart!" she exclaimed. "Bless yer brave little heart."

Newsy made further use of his coat sleeve and hastily changed the subject, fearful lest that obnoxious "cold" should deprive him of his manly self-control. "Oh, say, them cookies, they was bully! I hadn't had—I mean I hadn't bothered much that day with stuff to eat," contemptuously, "and when they found me I was some hungry fer cookies, I tell ye!"

"How long did it take you to eat them?" asked Winifred while Mrs. Betts wiped her eyes.

Newsy grinned. "I et one a minute, Mr. Perry said. He ——"

"Mr. Perry!" cried Winifred.

A JUNIOR CO-ED

"Do you mean the president of the board of trustees?" gasped Mrs. Betts.

"Sure! Mr. Perry! He come up with us. Said there was a trustee meetin' or suthin' he'd got to attend. He come with Sayles Cooper to find me, he did."

Newsy swelled out his narrow little chest, and made a vain attempt to spread his feet further apart. He pushed his cap to the back of his head, and appreciated to the full the amazement of his audience, but was unable to satisfy their curiosity further.

"They come, they did," was all the explanation he could make, "when I was a-gittin' my bunch of papers to sell, and they brought me right along with 'em. I was willin' to come," in a reasonable tone, "when they told me there wa'n't nothin' doin' agin me up on the Hill, and when Cooper he said I could go and live along with you and have all the sugar cookies I w-want."

Suddenly the little fellow's pride and manly determination collapsed into an outburst of childish grief, and he sought Mrs. Betts' shoulder sobbing:

"I was cold, I was, and I didn't have nuffin' much t' eat and I—I wanted t' come back, I tell ye, I wanted to as hard as anythin'—boo-hoo——"

A second time Winifred heard sounds of a prospective intrusion outside the door, but this time the sounds were by no means stealthy. Following

FROM THE DUST

a heavy step on the walk came a ponderous knocking.

"Come in," quavered Mrs. Betts.

The door opened, and Moses Carter filled the doorway with his huge fur coat.

"Newsy back—by gum!" he exclaimed in a big voice muffled by the fur collar which nearly concealed his head.

Then his glance fell on Mrs. Betts' tearful eyes and, heedless of the zero weather outside, he remained planted on the door-sill, and began a wild search for his handkerchief. Unable to locate this useful article he relieved his feelings by kicking the door shut, and, striding over to the table, dealt it a mighty blow crying:

"What did I tell ye? I said that when Newsy was found he should have one of the blooded colts, and the one who found 'im should have the other. I'm a man of my word, I am!" Mr. Carter turned his collar down and wiped his face on his fur glove. "Now, trot out the other feller!"

"It was Army Blue!" cried Winifred and, "It was Sayles Cooper!" exclaimed Mrs. Betts. "Bless his heart!"

"Sayles Cooper!" called Mr. Carter straightening his shoulders and gazing up wildly as though he expected to see Army Blue fall from the ceiling. "Where is he? He heard me say I'd give

A JUNIOR CO-ED

them blooded colts regardless, and," firmly, as though his word had been disputed, "I never go back on a promise."

"Cooper, he went up t' college," volunteered Newsy, lifting a pair of red-rimmed eyes from Mrs. Betts' shoulder. "He said he'd got t' clean up the registrar's office in a hurry, 'cause there was a committee meetin' up in the chancellor's office, and it would likely bile over in the registrar's, and the boy he left t' do the work won't do it all right, mebby, and so he had t' hustle."

Newsy's information recalled Winifred to a sense of her own duties. Pausing only long enough at the foot of the front stairs to send the news of the child's unexpected arrival to the second floor, she hurried up the Hill to the chancellor's office.

This room was already occupied by two men. The chancellor sat in the swivel chair behind his desk swinging his eye-glasses on an extended forefinger, his elbow on the arm of the chair. Occasionally, as he listened, he ran nervous fingers through the hair behind his ears, causing it to stick out grotesquely over his collar.

After what Newsy had told, Winifred was not surprised to find that the second man was Mr. Perry. He was facing the chancellor across the desk, talking earnestly, but, when the door opened, he paused and glanced over his shoulder.

FROM THE DUST

The chancellor merely smiled at the girl in his fatherly way and, as she hesitated, motioned toward the desk across the room, where she presided at a typewriter.

"Sit down, Winifred. In a few moments I shall be ready for you."

The president of the board glanced at her keenly. "You have a busy morning mapped out, chancellor, I ——" He started to arise, but the chancellor protested.

"I must hear the end of that story, Perry. Finish it. You can speak with perfect freedom before our little friend here. She is the daughter of my boyhood's dearest friend, and she does her father credit."

Mr. Perry smiled at Winifred in a cordial, friendly fashion, and went on with the story he had been relating when she appeared—a story which proved of more interest to her than to the chancellor.

"It was an unusually busy day at the office," Mr. Perry continued, "and he had come in the very busiest time—eleven o'clock. If the boy had merely sent me his name and asked to see me, of course he would never have got into my private office. Instead, he sent me a message that attracted my attention."

Mr. Perry leaned back and laid an arm along

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the chancellor's desk in an easy attitude. He was thoroughly enjoying his own recital.

"He sent me word that a student from Huntingdon College wanted to see me, but not for his own benefit. That was all, but it piqued my curiosity. I sent him word that I could give him exactly one minute of my time."

Here Mr. Perry chuckled reminiscently.

"He came in and walked up to me straight as a plumb-line. He began speaking the moment he entered, and finished when he reached my desk, but every word was just the word he wanted to use—and it counted.

"‘Mr. Perry,’ he said, ‘one minute won’t do me. I must have time to tell you about a lost boy I’ve come after, a Huntingdon child, and if you don’t help me find him you are not the same man that I heard address us at the college the morning after I registered!’”

The chancellor adjusted his eye-glasses on the end of his nose and looked over them. "Well, well!" he ejaculated. "Rather a sledge-hammer speech for our young friend to launch at you, eh?"

Mr. Perry laughed. "If you had seen the lad, Haight, you would have thought differently. His straightforward manner and intense earnestness took me off my feet. I got up and held out my hand. I must say I thought less just then about

FROM THE DUST

economy of time than about proving myself all that that young chap thought me to be. The rest you know. I took him out to lunch and we talked Newsy over. I put a good secret service man on the little chap's tracks, and we found him yesterday and brought him along with us."

Here Mr. Perry abandoned his easy attitude and leaning forward raised an impressive finger at the chancellor. "That brings me to what I began saying—and I want to say it in chapel Monday morning before the whole student body—that while I have a wholesome respect for the dead languages and a lively appreciation of the living ones—yet I—we—all of us appreciate far more sturdiness, uprightness, vim, determination—and when they are coupled with unselfishness—I confess that my acquaintance with that freshman has caused my opinion of the institution that harbors him to rise. I feel a greater interest in it, and a pride in the fact that I am president of its board of trustees."

Mr. Perry arose, and in his earnestness began to pace the floor in front of the desk.

"I tell you, Haight, unselfishness is the key that unlocks the difficulties of life. It's the solution to our social and financial problems—individual unselfishness, and corporate unselfishness——"

He checked himself suddenly, and half turned

A JUNIOR CO-ED

toward Winifred as though he recalled her presence for the first time since he had commenced speaking, and it reminded him of something else which he wished to say.

"And, by the way, I found out this week that Huntingdon College breeds the spirit of unselfishness in women as well as in men. Here is a letter I received recently from one of your sororities; Alpha Gamma, I think, is the name. I brought it along for you to read. I want to inquire further into the merits of the case, and if everything is as this letter states, I am going to explain the matter in chapel Monday and announce that I shall divide the first honors, which I promised, between this sorority and"—he consulted the letter—"this Miss M. Gussie Barker. I shall found a scholarship in the name of each, you understand, and so ——"

Here his interesting statement suffered an interruption from the telephone. It proved to be a call from the auditorium for the chancellor, who obeyed the summons at once, taking Mr. Perry with him.

"I shall be back in—say—twenty minutes, Winifred," he announced as they left the room.

Left alone, Winifred sprang jubilantly to her feet. "I was sure our letter would give honor where honor is due!" she exclaimed aloud; "and now I must see Army Blue."

FROM THE DUST

She tried the door leading into the registrar's office, but the door refused to open, being obstructed by a piece of heavy furniture. On the other side came sounds of vigorous movements which were evidently not productive of the desired results, for Army Blue was muttering audibly :

" Why won't the thing work ? "

Laughing softly, Winifred slipped out into the hall and was approaching the other door leading to the registrar's office, when she met Lillian Antwerp and Landon Stearns.

Lillian's eyes were sparkling with excitement, and her cheeks were scarlet.

" My thesis is way behind," she exclaimed, " or I shouldn't be up here at this unearthly hour to see professor about it "—she stole a shy glance at the registrar's door—" and besides, Winifred, I just had to find you and tell you that Mrs. Betts can't stay with us longer than New Year's, and she will never go to Louise Wallace's at all, because I heard her tell Mr. Carter this morning with my own ears that she would marry him New Year's day."

Winifred laughed. " I rejoice with Mr. Carter, but mourn with the chapter house inmates! "

" Flossie Rogers is mourning now," Lillian raced on. " She says there's only one ray of hope for her in the situation—if we don't get a good cook she shall start in dieting immediately after

A JUNIOR CO-ED

the holidays—but—Winifred! talk about rejoicing with Mr. Carter! He doesn't need any help in that direction. You ought to see him perform. I wouldn't have been here now had he kept on, because it was such fun. We were all down there in the kitchen laughing at him and crying over Newsy. Oh, it was so exciting!"

"I didn't want to come away myself," confessed Winifred.

"You missed a lot!" insisted Lillian. "We won't get any lunch to-day, I'm afraid. The breakfast table isn't cleared yet. Mrs. Betts is feeding Newsy. You ought to see that child eat. When I left he hadn't much swallow left, and yet he was bound to hold more."

Landon, his hands in his overcoat pockets, leaned against the wall roaring with laughter at this description, while Lillian's eyes, looking beyond Winifred, began to dance roguishly at Sayles Cooper, who had appeared outside the registrar's door, his voice raised lugubriously above Landon's laughter:

"I say! Can't one of you girls come in here and show me how this thing works?"

The three promptly accepted his invitation to "come in here," but, paying no attention to his repeated query, began to bombard him with questions and congratulations.

FROM THE DUST

"Oh, I didn't do anything!" protested Army Blue retreating from his friendly persecutors. "Mr. Perry turned the trick of finding Newsy—or a man that he employed did. I couldn't have done anything alone."

"But how on earth did you get hold of Mr. Perry?" asked Landon.

As he replied, Army Blue bent diffidently over the carpet-sweeper which occupied the center of the floor. "Aw—any one can get hold of him! I'm afraid"—he changed the subject hastily—"that you girls will get covered with dust in here. I wanted to ask you, though," he straightened himself and pointed at the sweeper, "how to make that thing work. I've never handled one before this morning."

"Ho!" laughed Landon. "That's easy enough. Just put a little elbow grease on and shove!"

He seized the handle and started the sweeper vigorously across the floor. Result—a trail of dirt in the wake of the sweeper.

"Did I ever see the likes o' that?" cried Landon ruefully, dropping the handle hastily. "I supposed a sweeper was made for the purpose of collecting dirt and not distributing it."

"I thought the same until I tried it," nodded Army Blue. "Howells told me it was no good, and hadn't been for weeks, but then—that was his

A JUNIOR CO-ED

opinion about things in general, so I didn't place any dependence on his word—until this morning."

"Get a new one," advised Lillian sagely, pushing her bare hands into her muff. "Of course it is worn out—it must be, or it wouldn't act like that!"

But Winifred laughed. "Oh, the helplessness of most men—and some women," she scoffed. "Bring me the waste paper basket."

Landon hastened to obey.

Raising the sweeper she pressed the springs which opened the dust box, and the overloaded, maligned cleaner disgorged its crowded contents, and, once more pushed along the rug, did its duty.

Above the sweeper Landon and Army Blue regarded each other sheepishly.

"Where do you keep your wits?" asked Landon cordially. "Mine are in a nutshell, and the shell is lost."

"Wits!" exclaimed Winifred disgustedly. "That operation was not connected with wits but experience. I've been obliged to use a sweeper often enough to understand ——"

She paused, her words arrested by Army Blue's absorption in the waste paper basket. He had turned from her suddenly, and with a glance at

FROM THE DUST

Lillian, had gone down on his knees and plunged his hands into the dirt from the carpet-sweeper.

"You are hunting for——" Winifred cried sharply, but the words were snatched out of her mouth.

"The ring!" shouted Army Blue. "The ring is here!"

He struggled to his feet and held it out to Lillian, the diamond gleaming brilliantly in the sun which streamed in at the window.

"My ring!" stammered Lillian in a dazed voice. "My ring!"

For a brief instant, in the midst of a breathless silence, her wide eyes were fixed on the jewel uncomprehendingly, her red lips parted and her cheeks flushed. Then, with a glad cry of realization, she dropped her muff on the floor and, heedlessly treading on it, took the ring and, with an expression of sweet and childish awe, slipped it on the third finger of her right hand. A radiant smile dawned in her eyes, and impulsively she stretched out both hands to Army Blue.

"If it hadn't been for you I should never have seen my beautiful ring again," she cried. "No one would have thought of looking among that dirt except you and——"

Here she suddenly withdrew her hands from

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Army Blue's warm clasp and modified the intensity of the moment by turning suddenly on Winifred and asking accusingly :

"Would you have thought of looking there, Freddie?"

Winifred laughed. "No, such an idea never once occurred to me. I have looked all over and around that carpet-sweeper, and never once thought of looking inside—no one has thought of it. I have not nearly so many wits as you give me credit for."

"Well," boomed a startling voice from the doorway, "there's wits here somewhere!"

The voice came from the midst of a familiar gray fur coat. Moses Carter's heavy tread had not disturbed the excited trio, and his presence was first announced by his voice.

Moses was too full of his own affairs to notice anything unusual or electrical in the atmosphere of the registrar's office. He had come in search of Army Blue, and, having found him, stated his errand without delay, but according to his own methods.

"Young feller," he began, "have you forgot what I said I'd give to the chap that brought Newsy back? Hey? Have ye forgot?" Mr. Carter's tone was fairly threatening.

Army Blue looked at him in a dazed way, but

FROM THE DUST

Landon gave the blue denim shoulder a resounding whack exclaiming :

"I remember. The blooded colt, man, the blooded, colt !"

Moses Carter pushed his fur cap to the back of his head and beamed at Landon. "You've got a proper memory, young man—a blooded colt it is, and he shall have it. I never went back on my word yet, and I ain't goin' to begin now. A blooded colt I promised to the one that 'd fetch Newsy back to Sairy Mary, says I, and my word is as good as my note."

Lillian, turning her ring around and around on her finger, glanced up at Army Blue and murmured to Winifred : "This is the end of the house that Jack built, isn't it ?"

Winifred smothered a laugh and answered meaningly, "I think, dear, that the end is not yet," but Lillian had already transferred her attention to Mr. Carter, and did not hear.

"The colt is yours, young man, after I break it, and ye can sell it at a good round price. Tell ye what"—Mr. Carter expanded in the warmth of the glances which fell on him—"I'll buy it back myself. You just wait 'til I get 'em broke—yours and Newsy's—and then we'll talk. I can't touch 'em 'til after New Year's," here Mr. Carter looked embarrassed, "but when I get—well, after New

A JUNIOR CO-ED

Year's I'll be ready to give my attention to them colts. They hain't got their equal in this county, if I do say it as shouldn't!"

Breath failing, Mr. Carter paused, and into the pause came Lillian with a characteristic outburst.

"This has been the happiest morning, hasn't it, Mr. Carter, for you and Newsy and Mrs. Betts and—and me——"

Her eyes fell as Army Blue interrupted in a low strong voice :

"Include me, please, in the list—and it seems to me I ought to be mentioned first this time, too."

Other Stories in this Series are :

A FRESHMAN CO-ED

A SOPHOMORE CO-ED

A SENIOR CO-ED

(In Press)

